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# African Bird Club



THE NATURAL  
HISTORY MUSEUM

29 AUG 2007

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**Bulletin of the African Bird Club**

**Vol 14 No 2 August 2007**

'Lost', obscure and  
poorly known African  
bird species

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Taxonomy of the  
Golden-winged  
Grosbeak

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Rediscovery of the  
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Breeding range  
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Hybrid pittas

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Birding northern Kenya:  
in search of  
Masked Lark

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# African Bird Club

## The African Bird Club aims to:

- provide a worldwide focus for African ornithology
- encourage an interest in the conservation of the birds of the region
- liaise with and promote the work of existing regional societies
- publish a twice-yearly colour bulletin
- encourage observers to visit lesser known areas of the region
- encourage observers to actively search for globally threatened and near-threatened species
- run the ABC Conservation Programme

Registered Charity No 1053920

## ABC Council

John Caddick (Treasurer), Julie Childs, Elaine Cook, Geoff Randall (Secretary), Neil Thomas, Stephanie Tyler, Richard Webb (Chairman) and Alan Williams

## President

Martin Woodcock

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Managing Editor: Guy Kirwan

Assistant Editor: Ron Demey

David Allan, Chris Bowden, Callan Cohen, Lincoln Fishpool, Peter Lack, Pete Leonard (Graphics Editor), Jeremy Lindsell and Steph Tyler

ABC particularly wishes to thank its Corporate Sponsors for their invaluable financial support in 2007: Abacus African Safaris, A&C Black, Avian Adventures, Avifauna, Bird Uganda, Birding Africa, Birdquest, Birdwatching Breaks, Calluna Books, Field Guides Inc., Greentours, Halcyon Gambia, Jenner Expeditions, Lawson's Birding Tours, Meet Us in Africa, Naturetrek, NHBS, Ornitholidays, Rockjumper Birding Tours, Sarus Bird Tours, Sunbird, Tropical Birding, Turaco Tours, Turtle Bay Beach Club, WildSounds, Wildwings, and Zeiss.

## ABC Membership

Membership is open to all. Annual subscription rates are:

Individual	Europe & Africa: UK£18	Rest of the World: UK£20
Family	Europe & Africa: UK£21	Rest of the World: UK£23
Student	Europe & Africa: UK£10	Rest of the World: UK£12
Supporting	UK£30 minimum	
Life	UK£350	

To join or for further details please visit the ABC web site (where there are secure online payment facilities) or write to the Membership Secretary—see contact information below.

## ABC Website

<http://www.africanbirdclub.org>

## Photographers and artists

ABC is always looking for drawings and photos to publish in the Bulletin. If you are interested in contributing, please contact the Graphics Editor, Pete Leonard, [pleonard@care4free.net](mailto:pleonard@care4free.net)

## Contact ABC

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Corporate Sponsors Officer *Elaine Cook*

• [corporatesponsors@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:corporatesponsors@africanbirdclub.org)

## The Bulletin of the African Bird Club

The Bulletin of the ABC provides a forum for news, letters, notices, recent publications, expedition results, reviews and interim publication of studies on African birds by contributors from throughout the world. Publication of results in the Bulletin of the ABC does not preclude publication of final results as journal papers either by the ABC or elsewhere. No

material should, however, be submitted simultaneously to the *Bulletin of the ABC* and to any other publication.

Brief notes for contributors appear elsewhere in this Bulletin and further details are available from the Editor ([editor@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:editor@africanbirdclub.org)).

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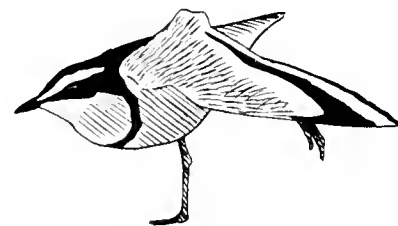
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# Club News



## ABC website

The website continues to be a popular resource attracting visitors from many countries. It is also a key tool in managing the Club's day-to-day business with increasing numbers of subscriptions, sponsorships, donations and sales arriving via the website.

The significant development in recent few months has been the addition of 53 downloadable country checklists at [www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html). These have been developed by ABC and Bob Dowsett for use by birdwatchers and ornithologists throughout Africa and its associated islands. They complement, and can be used in conjunction with, the country pages on the website. The checklists are not 'official' but all records are based on published information.

A database containing all species currently known from the African region underpins the country checklists. The database incorporates two taxonomic and nomenclatural sequences: Dowsett (2006) and the ABC checklist (revised January 2007). English, French and scientific names are provided in both cases. The latest version of the ABC checklist is at [www.africanbirdclub.org/resources/checklist.html](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/resources/checklist.html). You will find details of the layout, scope and sources of information, as well as being able to download the new version. The records in the checklist for sub-Saharan countries are based on the country lists in Dowsett, R. J. & Forbes-Watson, A. D. (1993) *Checklist of Birds of the Afrotropical and Malagasy Regions*, Vol. 1, published by Tauraco Press, Liège. The records were compiled from referenced works and are being brought up to date with records published subsequently. Records for North

African countries have been assembled from several sources, and the taxonomy and nomenclature of these lists are based on the ABC checklist. We have just migrated to the second version of the database with the addition of three new countries and updates for several others. There are many further developments we can foresee and, in time, we hope to make progress in the following areas: checklists for all countries in the region; inclusion of other languages; inclusion of alternative taxonomies and the addition of species details.

The African Bird Image Database, at <http://birdquest.net/afbid/> continues to be a well-used resource. The database is growing and at the time of writing held 7,475 photos of 1,576 species contributed by 341 photographers. Please continue to add your high-quality images to the database, especially of the 'missing' species.

Other recent developments have included a rewrite of the 'About the ABC' section of the website and the inclusion of downloadable versions of the constitution and annual accounts for the first time. We welcome new contributions and feedback to [info@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:info@africanbirdclub.org) concerning what has been achieved so far and what you think can be done to improve the site.

*Contributed by John Caddick*

## 2008 AGM

As the 2007 AGM account below mentions, the Thetford venue provided excellent facilities but was not as well attended as the London venue. Consequently, the 2008 AGM will be held on Saturday 8 March at The Nunnery, Thetford.

This announcement constitutes official notification of the AGM as required by the Club's constitution. Full details of the AGM agenda and programme for the day, with infor-

mation concerning timings will be posted to all UK-resident members in early 2008. To save postage, the programme will not be automatically distributed to members outside the UK. Any overseas member requiring a copy, either by post or e-mail, should apply to the Club Secretary. Details will also appear on the website.

## Membership Secretary

Following a request for a volunteer to replace Bill Quantrill as Membership Secretary, Alan Williams has agreed to assume the role, following the systems and procedures successfully operated by Bill. The e-mail remains: [membership@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:membership@africanbirdclub.org) and the usual postal address is the point of contact for all Club matters. For logistical reasons, Bill will be sending out back copies of Bulletins, but requests for these should be made by post or via the website. Alan is looking forward to returning to Council; he was Club Treasurer for five years from 1999.

## ABC Thetford meeting and AGM

The first AGM and meeting to be held outside London was something of an experiment to establish whether there would be sufficient interest to warrant future AGM's at other UK locations. The 50 members and visitors who attended were unanimous in their praise of the excellent facilities provided by the BTO. Ample space was provided for the various ancillary functions needed, such as reception, sales and refreshment. In addition, the location was ideal for those who wished to venture out into the grounds on what proved to be a fine day.

ABC President Martin Woodcock gave his usual upbeat opening address and thanked the BTO for being such welcoming hosts at their



marvellous headquarters. He linked, and drew parallels between, the work of the ABC and BTO, and talked of the history of atlases in Europe and Africa. This was followed by a fascinating account of the Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita*, by Dr Ken Smith. He described the recently rediscovered (tiny) population in the Syrian desert, the fitting of radio transmitters to three birds in June 2006, and the tracking of their migration to Sudan via the eastern coast of the Red Sea. They returned via Eritrea, on the west coast, then crossed the Red Sea to continue along the route taken on their autumn journey. Clearly this population is seriously threatened, but at least our knowledge of their migration and wintering grounds will permit some conservation measures to be put in place. Further information and a map of the route can be found at [www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/science/international/tracking/northern\\_bald\\_ibis.asp](http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/science/international/tracking/northern_bald_ibis.asp).

Herbert Byaruhanga, of Bird Uganda, gave a detailed account of the opportunities for birding trips to this relatively small and landlocked

East African country. A wide range of habitats, including semi-desert, rich savannas, lowland and montane forests, papyrus-ringed lakes and large swamps, contributes to the total of over 1,000 species recorded in the now politically stable and safe country of Uganda. Further details can be found at [www.birduganda.com](http://www.birduganda.com).

John Caddick described a Birding Africa-sponsored tour to Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe, of which an account has already appeared in *Bull. ABC* 14: 4–5.

Sadly, Ernest Garcia was unable to attend the meeting due to ill health, so his last-minute replacement was Kevin Vang who, with assistance from Wojciech Dabrowka, talked about their two visits to north-eastern Kenya. The first trip, in 2005, included Marsabit National Park and the Dida Galgula desert, north of the reserve, together with Lake Turkana. Their target was Masked Lark *Spizocorys personata*, which was photographed in the Didi Galgula. The second trip was to the area around Wajir, which they visited in 2007 and is close to the Somalia

border. Perhaps surprisingly, the area has strong densities of both birds and large mammals, due to hunting being less commonplace than in other parts of Kenya. Currently, no sites have been designated as conservation areas in this huge expanse of mostly arid land, an omission that Kevin considered should be rectified at the earliest possible opportunity. Their target species this time was Heuglin's Bustard *Neotis heuglini*. This large and uncommon bustard was seen and photographed on the last evening. Other species photographed included Somali Ostrich *Struthio camelus molybdophanes*, White-bellied Bustard *Eupodotis senegalensis*, Donaldson-Smith's Sparrowweaver *Plocepasser donaldsoni*, Black-headed Lapwing *Vanellus tectus* and Hunter's Sunbird *Nectarinia hunteri*.

Kevin emphasised that the areas visited are hostile and dangerous for the visitor. Any trips should be well planned and carefully undertaken, but the birding experience makes them worth the risk and effort. See [www.birdexplorers.com](http://www.birdexplorers.com) and pp. 210–215 of this issue for more information.

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## Minutes of the 13th AGM of the African Bird Club

held at the British Trust for Ornithology

The Nunnery, Thetford, at 13.45 hrs on Saturday 31 March 2007

### Present

The following members registered their attendance at the meeting: Phil Atkinson, Helen Baker, M. J. Barden, David Barker, Mr W. J. & Mrs P. A. Bartley, Keith Betton, Mike Blair, Keith Blomerley, Flip Bruce Lockhart, Herbert Byaruhanga, John Caddick, John Chapple, Julie Childs, Robert Clark, Kathleen Claydon, Steve Cooper, Martin Dallimer, Tony Gibbs, Stan Howe, R. J. Jeffers, Peter Jones, Peter Lack, Tony Lancaster, Russell Leavett, Pete Leonard, Duncan Macdonald, David Murdoch, Dianah Nalwanga, Martim Pinheiro de Melo, Bill Quantrill, Rowena

Quantrill, Matthew Rodgers, Keith Seaton, Neville Skinner, David Tomlinson, Steph Tyler, Richard Webb, Alan Williams, Barbara Woodcock, Martin Woodcock and Simon Wotton.

### 1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from: Jane Binstead, Chris Bowden, Adrian & Frances Buckle, D. Calder, Elaine Cook, Mike Edgecombe, Ernest Garcia, Roy & Moira Hargreaves, Guy Kirwan, Anne Nason, Derek Pomeroy, David Porter, Bev & Geoff Randall, Nigel Redman, Yvonne Savidge, Jill & Neil Thomas, Avi Wells and David & Kay White.

### 2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes of the 12th AGM had been published in the Bulletin and copies were distributed at the meeting. No comments were received. Keith Betton proposed that the minutes be accepted, Duncan Macdonald seconded and the proposal was approved unanimously.

### 3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

### 4. Report of Council for 2006

The Chairman reported that 2006 had been another successful year for the Club. Membership at the end of 2006 stood at 1,238, a marginal

increase on the figure of 1,234 at the end of 2005. A total of 102 new members joined during the year and five previously lapsed members rejoined, whilst 103 existing members failed to renew. The Club planned to launch a membership drive during 2007, using copies of a new Club flyer which Crowes (the Bulletin's printers) had generously offered to provide at no cost.

The Club's conservation programme had a record year, with 16 projects sponsored in nine countries. Grants totaling £11,540 had been approved. The 2006 volume of the Bulletin, Volume 13, was the biggest yet, with 240 pages, increased use of colour and 34 articles in addition to the regular features. For the first time photographs were used instead of artwork for the cover illustration. The website also has gone from strength to strength, with the addition of downloadable country checklists, the expansion of the AFBID bird image database to include more than 6,000 photographs and over 1,500 species, and continuing online sales of Club merchandise. Further additions to the site are planned for 2007.

A determined effort, led by Elaine Cook, to recruit corporate sponsors had resulted in 17 new or returning sponsors being added to the ten who had already signed up. The Chairman expressed appreciation for the support we receive from ABC's sponsors, mentioning in particular several who had underwritten the total costs of specific conservation projects.

The Club had once again mounted a successful stand at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water, and had also been present at the Lee Valley Bird Fair. Consideration was being given to participation in other regional fairs in the future. Sales of Club merchandise had held up well despite the lack of any new designs in 2006. Several new items were planned for 2007.

The Club now has representatives in 34 countries, but there are still several countries, including 33 in Africa, where we are not represented. The full list appears on the inside back cover of this Bulletin: suggestions for new representatives are welcomed.

Finally, the Chairman thanked those members of Council standing down. He paid particular tribute to Moira Hargreaves, who during eight years on Council had made a tremendous contribution as Sales Officer, often in difficult personal circumstances, and to Bill Quantrill who over a period of 11 years had handled a wide range of Council responsibilities. In recognition of this lengthy period of service, Council had agreed to make Bill an Honorary Life Member of the Club. The Chairman concluded by appealing for volunteers to join Council, particularly to fill the vacancies of Publicity Officer, Meetings Officer and Advertising Officer.

#### **5. Presentation of the Accounts for 2006 and Treasurer's Report**

In presenting the Accounts, copies of which were distributed at the meeting, the Treasurer reported that total income in 2006 increased by 2% compared with 2005. Increases in Bulletin and merchandise sales, Gift Aid and investment income were partially offset by a decrease in donations to the Conservation Fund. Expenditure during the year was 15% up on 2005, mainly because of a 40% increase in disbursements from the Conservation Fund and increased Bulletin costs. In total there was a net surplus of £3,780 over the year. Net assets at the end of the year, at £18,841, were equivalent to approximately six months' expenditure, which is in line with the reserves policy in our risk management plan. Russell Leavett proposed that the Accounts be approved as presented, Stan Howe seconded and the proposal was adopted unanimously.

#### **6. Election of Council**

The following were unanimously elected to the African Bird Club Council for 2007: John Caddick, Julie Childs, Elaine Cook, Geoffrey Randall, Neil Thomas, Steph Tyler, Richard Webb and Alan Williams.

#### **7. Election of Executive Officers**

The following were unanimously elected as Executive Officers of the Club for 2007:

Chairman: Richard Webb  
Treasurer: John Caddick  
Secretary: Geoffrey Randall

#### **8. Appointment of Auditor**

Messrs Burton Sweet were again unanimously elected as Independent Examiners for 2007.

#### **9. Any Other Business**

In response to a query from the floor, the Chairman explained that requests for support for conservation projects are assessed by the Conservation Committee, who make recommendations to Council. Council then decide which projects to approve, to make best use of the funds available in the Conservation Fund. Several members complimented the editors on the consistently high standard of the Bulletin. Duncan Macdonald asked how many members had authorised the Club to recover tax paid on their subscriptions under the Gift Aid scheme. The Treasurer confirmed that the great majority of eligible members had signed Gift Aid certificates.

The meeting closed at 14.30 hrs.

# Statement of financial activities—year ended 31 December 2006

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total funds 2006 £	Total funds 2005 £
Incoming resources				
<i>Incoming resources from generated funds</i>				
Voluntary income	7,805	1,020	8,825	9,822
Activities for generating funds	6,639	-	6,639	5,397
Investment income	1,152	-	1,152	884
<i>Incoming resources from charitable activities</i>				
Subscriptions	19,062	-	19,062	18,949
Total incoming resources	34,658	1,020	35,678	35,052
Resources expended				
<i>Cost of generating funds</i>				
Fundraising trading: cost of goods sold and other costs	2,332	-	2,332	2,376
<i>Charitable activities</i>				
Grants payable	6,470	1,700	8,170	5,700
Cost of activities in furtherance of charity's objects	16,241	-	16,241	15,616
Support costs	4,029	-	4,029	2,837
<i>Governance costs</i>	1,126	-	1,126	1,125
Total resources expended	30,198	1,700	31,898	27,654
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources	4,460	(680)	3,780	7,398
Total funds at 1 January 2006	14,533	528	15,061	7,663
Total funds at 31 December 2006	18,993	(152)	18,841	15,061

The Charity has no recognised gains or losses other than the results for the year as set out above. All of the activities of the charity are classed as continuing.

# Balance sheet—year ended 31 December 2006

	2006 £	2005 £
Current assets		
Stock	1,246	2,205
Cash at bank	35,617	30,468
	36,863	32,673
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(6,020)	(6,554)
Net current assets	30,843	26,119
Creditors: amounts falling due after one year	(12,002)	(11,058)
Net assets	18,841	15,061
Unrestricted funds		
Designated Fund	2,000	1,000
Club Fund	10,954	7,318
Conservation Fund	6,039	6,215
	18,993	14,533
Restricted funds	(152)	528
	18,841	15,061

A full copy of the annual report of the Trustees and financial statements can be obtained from the Club Treasurer.



# Birding Africa

[www.birdingafrica.com](http://www.birdingafrica.com)

**Madagascar** Ground-rollers and lemurs Oct 2007

**Uganda** Birds & primates Jan 2008 \*Special £1790\*

**Cameroon** Picathartes and mountain endemics March 2008

**Namibia & Okavango** Pel's Fishing-Owl April 2008

**Gabon** Birds and Mandrill Sept 2008

Also Angola, South Africa, Zambia, Mali, Tanzania

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Red-headed Picathartes, photo courtesy of BirdLife Intl

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The ABC Conservation Fund has been in place for over ten years, during which time over 80 projects in 27 countries have been supported to a total value of over UK£50,000, through the generosity of our members and Corporate Sponsors. A record number of applications for funds has been received in recent months and we have been able to fund many of them. ABC has received several substantial donations from members and will be able to claim Gift Aid on many. In addition, Wildwings and Rockjumper have supported specific projects, Birding Africa has made a donation following the 2006 Conservation Tours, and WildSounds has also made a donation as a result of the success of product sales through the website. We gratefully acknowledge all of this invaluable support.

### New awards

Recent donations to the Conservation Fund have enabled us to release funds in support of several projects that were 'on hold' due to shortage of available monies.

These include UK£1,000 for the 2007 Expedition Award to Jeremiah Kyomo for **Surveys in the Uvidunda Mountains, part of the Eastern Arc Mountains in Tanzania** and UK£750 to support a programme that aims to conserve **Mauritius Olive White-eye** *Zosterops chloronothus*. Furthermore, the Club has been able to allocate UK£900 to a proposal by Irene Madindou and Ronald Mulwa, who aim to examine the current status of a small population of **Grey Parrots** *Psittacus erithacus* in **Kakamega Forest**, where probably fewer than ten pairs survive. Grey Parrots are threatened throughout their range by over-collecting for the bird trade and loss of their forest habitat (see *Bull. ABC* 14: 10). Irene and Ronald will assess the effects of the pet trade and habitat destruction on the remaining wild population in Kenya. Specifically, they will seek to document the current population of the parrot in Kakamega, to develop a monitoring protocol for Grey Parrot population trends, habitat quality and trade activities, and to assess the involvement in, attitude towards and awareness of, the local community concerning the Grey Parrot trade. They will use point counts and line

transects, and search for nests along transects. Any opportunistic sightings of Grey Parrots, including recent sightings by birdwatchers at the site, will be collected. Questionnaires will be conducted with local people in areas around Buyangu and Isecheno, to establish their knowledge of the trade.

ABC has also funded the study, also mentioned in *Bull. ABC* 14: 8–9, into the **Effects of oil spills and gas flares on waterbirds in the Niger Delta of Nigeria**. Rufus Idris and two colleagues aim to gather historical data on bird species in the area, and to identify those still present. In particular they will seek to observe how the delta's habitats are affected by oil spillages and gas flares and how these have impacted avian populations, distributions and nesting and feeding. They also wish to generate awareness of the need to develop pragmatic solutions to protect birds in the area, working in conjunction with the Nigerian Environmental Society (NES). An award of UK£780 was made by ABC.

Unfortunately, the project on Spotted Ground Thrushes *Zoothera guttata* in Kakamega Forest, Kenya (*Bull. ABC* 14: 8), will not now go ahead.

In addition, the Club has funded a further three projects. A **three-month study of the Oberlander's Ground Thrush** *Zoothera oerlaenderi* in **Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, Uganda**, will be overseen by Dr Thomas Gottshalk in close association with Prof. Derek Pomeroy of Makerere University, Kampala. The aim will be to clarify the status of this Near-Threatened species and to garner data on its habitat and ecological preferences. A training element is included as part of the project, and local ornithologists will undertake the work. ABC has allocated UK£900 to this project.

**Promoting public awareness in biodiversity conservation at Lake Tsimanampetsotsa, Madagascar**, is the title of an application by Sama Zefania, who will work closely with the National Association for Management of Protected Areas (ANGAP). Sama proposes to compile all existing data on the lake, educate target groups as to the conservation importance of the area, and to train a local ANGAP guide in



bird surveys and identification. ABC has awarded Sama UK£848 towards this well-justified project.

**Bird surveys in coastal forests of Tanzania** (Kitope, Kiwenginia, Kiwi and Namatwa in Kilwa) is the final new project to receive ABC's support. Spotted Ground Thrush (Endangered) and East Coast Akalat *Sheppardia gunningi* (Vulnerable) occur in these forests, but little is known of their current status. The projected work will include surveys, casual observations and mist-netting of birds, and will be undertaken by the Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania (WCST). A sum of UK£860 was awarded to Elias Mungaya of WCST towards the surveys.



East Coast Akalat /  
Rougegorge de Gunning  
*Sheppardia gunningi*  
(Claire Spottiswoode)

## News of previous projects

Researchers at the Department of Ornithology, National Museums of Kenya, in Nairobi, studied the **Implications of grassland quality on Jackson's Widowbird *Euplectes jacksoni* and other threatened birds in the Mau Narok-Molo grasslands in Kenya**, between 16 and 29 December 2006. Thirteen plots were surveyed but Jackson's Widowbird was encountered just seven times, three of these in the study plots. A total of 50 individuals was recorded in the study plots and 80 elsewhere. The species was recorded regularly in green wheat fields, suggesting a preference for ripening (but not dry) grains. In two of the flocks (of c.10 individuals each), two breeding-plumaged males were seen, suggesting that the breeding season had recently ended (a separate survey recorded more than 30 breeding males in ten days in September 2006). However, two dome-shaped nests were recorded in dense tussocks less than 1 m above ground. Both contained three eggs.

In Mau Narok-Molo, the Maasai community has set aside some land for grazing, mainly along

valley slopes and a few regenerating grasslands were seen, which had been previously burnt or planted with cereals. These remnants appear to hold significant populations of highland grassland birds. A mosaic of different grassland types is needed to conserve all three endemic threatened birds. For example, Sharpe's Longclaw *Macronyx sharpei* prefers short grass with tussocks, whilst Aberdare Cisticola *Cisticola aberdare* appears to select dense tussocks with scattered herbs for perching, but Jackson's Widowbird is apparently something of a grassland generalist.

**Sakalava Rail in Madagascar.** In 2006, Marc Rabenandrasana *et al.* received an award from ABC to study the conservation biology of the Sakalava Rail *Amaurornis olivieri*, an Endangered waterbird confined to Madagascar, and to conduct a public awareness campaign in areas surrounding rail habitats, in order to encourage wetland protection in the Besalampy complex, a recently identified Important Bird Area (IBA) in western Madagascar. Field surveys were conducted in July and October–November 2006. A total of 51 birds was recorded at Besalampy, excluding chicks: 39 at Lake Amparihy, nine at Lake Ampandra and three at Lake Sahapy. Lake Amparihy appears to be the most favourable breeding site in the complex. However, reproductive success was low, perhaps explaining why the species is very rare. Seven birds were caught and marked using colour and SAFRING rings. The ringing programme will provide baseline data for a long-term study of the rail's movements and the team hopes to extend this facet of the project to another site. There is evidence of sexual dimorphism in Sakalava Rail, based on two pairs that were caught: the upperparts were pale brown-green and the tarsi pale pinkish in females, whereas adult males have rufous upperparts and bright red-pink tarsi. The future of the Sakalava Rail appears reasonably bright. Two of the three lakes already possess management plans that involve community groups in the wetlands' direct protection. However, conservation actions require greater support from these local partners, if protected areas are to be established as legally agreed at a national level.

*Stephanie Tyler*



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# Africa Round-up



## General

### News of the world's most threatened birds

The latest evaluation of the world's birds has revealed that more species than ever are threatened with extinction, and that additional conservation action is critical to reversing current declines. BirdLife International's annual Red List update, which takes into account population size, population trends and range size for all 10,000 bird species worldwide, states that 1,221 species are currently considered threatened and are to be listed as such on the 2007 IUCN Red List. The update also shows an additional 812 bird species now considered Near Threatened, or a total of 2,033 species that are urgent priorities for conservation action. The overall conservation status of the world's birds has deteriorated steadily since 1988, when they were first comprehensively assessed. Now, more than one-fifth (22%) of the planet's birds is at increased risk of extinction. The 2007 update has highlighted the deteriorating status of the world's vultures: five more species, including

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, have been 'uplisted' to higher categories of concern due to habitat loss, conversion and degradation (which remains the principal threat to all the world's birds), fewer feeding opportunities (as a result of declining wild ungulate populations on which they scavenge) and poisoning by the veterinary drug diclofenac—a factor behind rapid population declines in vultures across Asia. Bird species restricted to oceanic islands continue to be among the most threatened due mainly to the introduction of alien invasives. St Helena Plover *Charadrius sanctaehelenae* has been 'uplisted' to Critically Endangered, having suffered considerably in recent years from habitat degradation due to a proliferation in invasive plants and predation by cats.

Whilst the number of bird species included on the Red List increases, where conservation actions are enacted, species have shown signs of recovery. Mauritius Parakeet *Psittacula eques*, which survives in south-west Mauritius (having become extinct historically on Réunion) has been 'downlisted' (to Endangered) due to a highly successful recovery programme that has included release of captive-bred birds, measures to control predators and the provision of artificial nest sites. The programme has been led by the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, a conservation NGO that has worked closely with the Mauritian government. Further good news is provided by Spectacled Petrel *Procellaria conspicillata*, 'downlisted' from Critically Endangered to Vulnerable, following an increase from c.1,000 pairs in the 1980s to 10,000 pairs in 2006. The population increase is part of a long-term recovery, largely in response to removal of pigs from its only breeding site, Inaccessible Island, Tristan

da Cunha, and has occurred despite losses to longline fisheries.

The results of BirdLife's Red List update will be incorporated into the 2007 IUCN Red List, released in September 2007. BirdLife's revisions to Red List categories, and the associated documentation, including fact-sheets for all the world's 10,000 bird species, can be found on the BirdLife website: [www.birdlife.org/datazone/species/index.html](http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/species/index.html).

Source: [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)

### Waterbird populations continue to decline

The latest edition of *Waterbird Population Estimates* (see *Bull. ABC* 14: 11) reports that 44% of populations for which trend data were available were found to be decreasing or to have become extinct since the previous edition was published in 2002. Causes of these declines include reclamation of wetlands, increasing pollution, illegal hunting and expanding urbanisation.

Source: [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)

### Avian influenza globally dispersed by poultry trade, not migratory birds

A comprehensive critical review of scientific literature on the recent expansion of the highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1, published by three French ecologists in April 2007, concludes that poultry trade, rather than bird migration, is the main mechanism of the global spread of the virus. Migratory birds have been repeatedly and widely blamed for outbreaks that have subsequently been proven to originate in the movement of live poultry and products such as poultry meat. Although wild birds constitute a source of gene fragments of low pathogenic avian 'flu that are sometimes transmitted to domestic birds, the scientists state that how the virus subsequently



Egyptian Vulture / Vautour  
*Neophron percnopterus*  
(Mark Anderson)

evolves depends on poultry rearing practices. If migratory birds such as ducks and waders, which travel several hundred kilometres in a single day, were the main vectors, the virus should spread by large jumps of hundreds or thousands of kilometres. This is not what happened: only sporadic cases were observed and no evidence for long-distance transmission during seasonal migration has been found. Although an international conference held in May 2006 recognised that the virus was mainly spread by the poultry trade, media releases from various national and international bodies, including the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), have continued to focus on the role of migratory birds. This is misleading and could cause the current trend to better animal welfare resulting from free-range agriculture to be reversed to battery farming, thereby increasing the risk of outbreaks. The authors conclude that strong veterinary and trade controls are more likely to be a successful strategy.

Source: *Ibis* 149, pp 202–214

**How many species of quailfinches are there?**

A major integrated review of the systematics and taxonomy of the African quailfinch genus *Ortygospiza* has been undertaken by Robert Payne and Michael Sorenson, using plumage, bill colour, nestling mouth pattern and colour, song and calls, and mtDNA, and taking into account range considerations. The overall conclusion is that it is best to consider all the various forms as one rather variable species, *Ortygospiza atricollis*, but that there are three main groups (treated as separate species in *The Birds of Africa*), namely: a West African group containing *ansorgei*, *atricollis* and *ugandae*; a group of black-chinned birds in central Africa—*gabonensis*, *fuscata* and *dorsotriata*; and a group of white-chinned birds in eastern and southern Africa—*fuscocrissa*, *muelleri*, *smithersi* and *digressa*.

Source: *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl.* 127, pp 4–26



Abdim's Stork / Cigogne d'Abdim  
*Ciconia abdimii* (Mark Anderson)

**Satellite tracking of Abdim's Stork**

Flemming Jenzen and his colleagues have tracked seven Abdim's Storks *Ciconia abdimii* from their breeding areas in southern Niger to their non-breeding range, mainly to the south-east of Lake Victoria (including Serengeti National Park) in Tanzania, and back. One bird also spent two successive winters in the same area of Zimbabwe, before returning to Tanzania for a period. While on their wintering grounds the birds were more or less sedentary. They depart their breeding areas in November and commence the return journey in February, reaching Niger by mid May.

Source: *Ostrich* 77, pp 210–219

**Northern Bald Ibis report**

The latest Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* report from the second meeting of the International Advisory Group (IAGNBI), held in



Greater Flamingos / Flamants roses *Phoenicopterus (ruber) roseus*  
(Georges Olivos)

Spain late last year, was published in May 2007. It includes details on a number of significant advances in knowledge on this threatened species and in methodology to develop reintroduction techniques. It also features a contribution on the three radio-tagged Syrian birds which were found to winter in Ethiopia, and updates and reviews of the various programmes and the Species Action Plan. For an electronic copy, contact Chris Bowden, IAGNBI Chairman, e-mail: [chris.bowden@rspb.org.uk](mailto:chris.bowden@rspb.org.uk)

Source: *Chris Bowden* in litt.  
May 2007

**North Africa**

**Stopover or not on migration across the Sahara Desert**

As part of a wider study of migrants crossing the Sahara Desert, Volker Salewski and Michael Schaub have found that, in autumn, most birds which did stopover at a coastal site in Mauritania did so for a short time only. However, at two inland sites in spring, stopovers were longer and some individuals of some species remained up to 30 days. In neither case was the length of stopover time related to the amount of fat noted at their first capture.

Source: *Ibis* 149, pp 223–236

**Breeding Greater Flamingos in Algeria**

Over 5,000 pairs of Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus (ruber) roseus* were found breeding in May

2005, by Boudjéma Samraoui and colleagues, on a natural islet in a seasonal salt lake near Ain M'lila, in the Hauts Plateaux. It seems there was a high breeding success rate in 2005, following two attempts in previous years which failed completely due to human disturbance. Sightings of ringed birds suggest that the birds are part of the France, Spain and Sardinia population. Administrative steps are now being taken to acquire some protection for the site, which to date has no formal status.

Source: Ostrich 77, pp 153–159

### Algeria inaugurates new national park

In May 2007, Algeria inaugurated the 250,000-ha Taghit National Park. The park, which is located around a small oasis in the south-west, aims to protect grasslands, restore palm groves, reforest denuded land with indigenous trees and establish water points. Mammals to be protected include 33 species, among them Barbary Sheep *Ammotragus lervia* and three species of antelope. To date, 107 bird species have been recorded, including Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata*, but an exhaustive list has yet to be compiled.

Source: allAfrica.com

## West & Central Africa

### Enormous Lesser Kestrel roost found

Surveys in Senegal by LPO (BirdLife in France) have revealed a single roost containing over 28,600 Lesser Kestrels *Falco naumanni* (Vulnerable) and 16,000 African Swallow-tailed Kites *Chelictinia riocourii*—one of the largest bird of prey roosts ever found. Philippe Pilard, of LPO, who discovered the site in January 2007, had to walk 10 km, crossing rivers by canoe, before he finally found the roost, having initially noted hundreds of birds passing over him, all in the same direction. The existence of such communal roosts during the non-breeding season—sometimes involving several thousand individuals—has been observed in several different



African Swallow-tailed Kite / Elanion nauclear *Chelictinia riocourii* (Callan Cohen [www.birdingafrica.com](http://www.birdingafrica.com))

countries, amongst them Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, but the present discovery is deemed exceptional. The numbers of roosting Lesser Kestrels are thought to represent more than half of the known breeding populations of Western Europe and North Africa combined. The finding is the culmination of seven years of research and many hours of observation in the field by LPO ornithologists, and during the next few years comprehensive surveys of the region are being planned. “Although there have been a number of conservation efforts devoted to Lesser Kestrel in France and elsewhere in Europe, these efforts will be fruitless if nothing is put in place to protect its African wintering grounds”, said Yvan Tariel, Head of Raptor Conservation at LPO.

Source: [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)

### Expedition solves Aquatic Warbler mystery

Following five years of investigation, an expedition has tracked down the wintering grounds of Europe's most threatened migratory songbird—Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*—also in Senegal. The team comprised researchers from the BirdLife International Aquatic Warbler Conservation Team (AWCT) supported by staff from the Senegalese and Mauritanian National Parks services. The expedition discovered large numbers of Aquatic Warblers within an area of c.100 km<sup>2</sup>

in Djoudj National Park, an Important Bird Area (IBA) in north-west Senegal. Preliminary estimates range from 5,000–10,000 birds at this one site. Aquatic Warbler has declined dramatically in Europe over the last century, and its global population now numbers perhaps just 15,000 pairs—largely due to drainage of its wetland nesting sites. An estimated 95% of habitat has been lost in the last century. Future work in the field and using satellite maps should help to identify other potential sites in southern Mauritania and elsewhere in western Africa.

Source: [www.birdlife.org/news/news/2007/02/aquatic\\_warbler\\_senegal.html](http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2007/02/aquatic_warbler_senegal.html)

### And a cisticola mystery solved too

Jeremy Lindsell, in a museum and field study, has revealed the true status of the Chattering Cisticola *Cisticola anonymus* in Upper Guinea. His work has revealed the lack of acceptable specimen records of the species for Sierra Leone or Ghana, but he, and others, have recently discovered birds apparently appertaining to *C. anonymus* in the environs of Gola Forest and elsewhere in Sierra Leone.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. 127, pp 129–135

### Verreaux's Eagle in Cameroon

Another new country record from West Africa involves a Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii*, observed by Frank Steinheimer and Svenja Sammler, in April 2006, in south-west Cameroon, the first national record, although a number of other recent records have been published from North and Central Africa.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. 127, pp 167–168

## Atlantic Islands

### Are there two species of Madeiran Storm-petrel in the Azores?

Mark Bolton has been using playback of recordings of the calls of Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro* to investigate further the relationships

between the various populations. The data on responses of different populations to each other (the study included the Cape Verde and Galápagos islands as well) produced further evidence that birds breeding in the Azores in the hot season (April–August) are reproductively isolated and therefore potentially a different taxon from the those breeding in the cool season (August–March), as well as being different from the Cape Verde and Galápagos populations.

Source: *Ibis* 149, pp 255–263

## East Africa

### Change of editor for *Scopus*

The East African journal *Scopus* is 30 years old this year. It continues to provide an outlet for publications on the birds of eastern Africa, even though in some recent years publication has been a little erratic. For the last few years Jeremy Lindsell has been editing the journal from the UK, but he has now handed over the lead to Dr Mwangi Githiru (c/o Nature Kenya, PO Box 44486, GPO 00100, Nairobi, Kenya). Also, Graeme Backhurst and Don Turner are standing down from the editorial board after many years of service, whilst Muchai Muchane and Darcy Ogada have taken their places. The latest issue (volume 26) appeared in May 2007. As usual it contains a range of articles and short communications. Most of these relate to new records, range extensions and such like but, as noted in the Editorial, there is an increasing emphasis on

conservation, and this issue includes an article by Paul Ndag'ang'a on the status and conservation options for the Blue Swallow *Hirundo atrocaerulea* in Kenya. Other papers include records (26 new species and observations of another 20) from Serengeti National Park, the first records of Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*, Black-collared Eremomela *Eremomela atricollis* and Chestnut-mantled Sparrow-weaver *Plocepasser rufoscapulatus* for East Africa, first Tanzanian records of Toro Olive Greenbul *Phyllastrephus hypochloris*, Cape Shoveler *Anas smithii*, Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* and Brown Booby *S. leucogaster*, and first Ugandan White-crowned Lapwing *Vanellus albiceps*, with notes on breeding, feeding and range extensions of others.

Source: *Scopus* 26, pp 1–52

### New agreement gives boost to Africa's migratory waterbirds

Efforts to conserve Africa's waterbirds have been given a significant boost by the launch of an innovative partnership aimed at conserving the critical areas used by migratory birds throughout Africa and Eurasia. In April 2007 BirdLife International and the Kenya Wildlife Service agreed to unite the organisations' efforts in flyway-scale monitoring and conservation in eastern and southern Africa. The agreement will become a basis for regional work on the Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) project and is expected to strengthen capacity and increase knowledge of migratory waterbirds within the region. WOW is unique in combining a flyway-level perspective with an emphasis on practical conservation at the site and regional level.

Source: [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)

### Update on Mabira

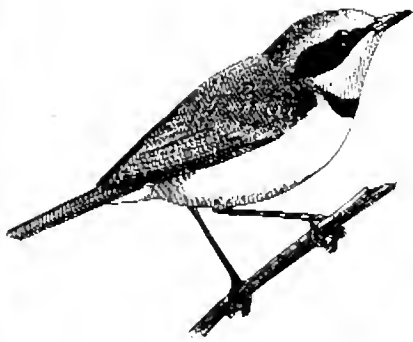
In *Bull. ABC* 14: 13 we reported on an alarming threat to Mabira Forest. Uganda's cabinet has relatively recently suspended a proposal to give away part of this important area of tropical forest to a sugarcane grower, just weeks after three people were killed in a protest against the degazettement

of the site. President Yoweri Museveni has faced vocal opposition, including from Nature Uganda (the BirdLife partner in-country) over the plan to raze 7,100 ha of Mabira Forest, a nature reserve since 1932, and give the land to the privately owned Mehta Group's sugar estate. Environment minister Maria Mutagamba told the Reuters news agency that the government had shelved it, pending a cabinet committee study. Mutagamba stated that the relevant ministry would draw up a map of land available to investors in Uganda, from sectors such as coffee, sugar, manufacturing or tourism, to determine whether there was alternative land for Mehta's sugar. Critics say razing part of Mabira would destroy a fragile environment—drying-up rainfall, threatening a watershed for streams that feed Lake Victoria and removing a buffer against pollution of the lake from Uganda's two largest industrial towns. The forest also harbours threatened wildlife including over 300 bird species, among them the globally Endangered Nahan's Francolin *Francolinus nahani*. It also supports nine species of primate, a recently identified new mangabey subspecies, *Lophocebus albigena johnstoni*, and a new species of bat.

Source: [save\\_mabira@yahoo.com](mailto:save_mabira@yahoo.com) in litt. May 2007

### Conservation at Arabuko-Sokoke Forest

A study has recently been completed concerning the lessons learnt from one of BirdLife's longest-lasting projects in Africa: the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest (ASF) project in Kenya. ASF is a priority Important Bird Area (IBA) and the largest extant block of the East African coastal forests. Through projects funded by a number of agencies, implemented by BirdLife International and, subsequently, by Nature Kenya (BirdLife in Kenya), huge gains have been made over the last 20 years. There is improved governance through the formation of an ASF Management Team comprising various government departments and parastatals, the formulation of a 25-



Black-collared Eremomela /  
Erémomèle à cou noir *Eremomela*  
*atricollis* (Pete Leonard)

year Strategic Management Plan in 2002, and the establishment of an active ASF Adjacent Dwellers Association. Secondly, successful income-generating activities have been established, including the award-winning Kipepeo project (see [www.kipepeo.org](http://www.kipepeo.org)). Ecotourism and environmental education have been enhanced, mainly through the vibrant ASF Guides Association and a unique Schools and Ecotourism Scheme run by A Rocha Kenya. Fourthly, various community development initiatives have been initiated, including water provision, farmer field schools, and Natural Resource and Participatory Forest Management schemes. Together, these activities have had an enormous effect on community attitudes towards conservation, transforming previous antagonists into strong proponents. Still, as in most integrated conservation and development projects, it remains rather difficult to determine the impact these initiatives have had on biodiversity conservation. Suitable baseline data are lacking and consistent monitoring for most flora and fauna have not taken place. Therefore, demonstrating the link between conservation and development at ASF still remains a key challenge, and one which many BirdLife partners face in similar projects.

Source: *BirdLife International Africa Partnership e-bulletin 11*, p 6

### First Grauer's Swamp Warbler nests found

Recent surveys of Africa's Albertine Rift Valley have shed new light on Grauer's Swamp Warbler *Bradypterus graueri*, a particularly vocal Endangered bird that occurs nowhere else. Until now, its breeding and nesting behaviour remained largely unknown, although a nest of the species was found in Rwanda's Rugezi Swamp, an IBA currently lacking legal protection, in 2005. During routine surveys of Kabatwa Swamp, Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda, a small cup-shaped nest constructed of sedges, containing two chicks, was found by Claudien Nsabagasani and his colleagues. The nest was visited

daily before the chicks fledged a week later. A photograph of the warbler nest is available on the African pages of the BirdLife International website.

Source: [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)

### Heavy rains leave flamingos starving

Lesser Flamingos *Phoeniconaias minor* were found weakened from malnutrition at Lake Bogoria, Kenya, by Earthwatch-supported researchers investigating the causes of death of thousands of flamingos in Kenya last year and at least 500,000 birds during the 1990s. Post-mortem examinations revealed that the birds weighed just 63% of their normal body mass. This finding is corroborated by evidence of altered behaviour in the flamingos which, instead of foraging in dense flocks along the shores of Lake Bogoria, were seen to search for food in a dispersed manner and even to feed at hot-spring pools, small rain puddles in fields and on roads. It is thought that heavy rains caused high water and sediment levels in the lake, greatly reducing the concentration of spirulina (the blue-green bacteria that is the flamingos' main food source). Analysis of the lake water confirmed that the low levels of spirulina left the birds with only 10% of their minimum daily food requirements. Malnutrition may thus be one of the factors for the large numbers of flamingo deaths. Why the birds did not simply leave Bogoria is unknown; it is speculated that they were already in poor condition when they arrived and were unable to regain sufficient strength to move on. The flamingos at Bogoria also tended to be a paler shade of pink than normal—an indication of their poor condition.

Source: [www.earthwatch.org](http://www.earthwatch.org)

### Main threats to Kenya's IBAs examined

Overgrazing and illegal grazing are the main threats to Kenya's Important Bird Areas (IBAs), with 57% of IBAs affected by these, according to a report on the challenges facing the country's IBAs. Illegal logging, vegetation destruction and firewood collection are addition-

al serious threats. On a more positive note, it was found that the state of the IBAs had changed little between 2004 and 2005. The report provides a basis for developing ways of addressing the threats, and work is already underway to develop environmentally safe alternatives to firewood collection.

Source: [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)

### Birds and farmers in Uganda to benefit from new initiative

To counteract deforestation threatening the Echuya Central Forest Reserve, an Important Bird Area in south-west Uganda, a conservation project was started in 2006 which aims to reduce the pressures bearing down on Echuya and make resource-use sustainable. Some 100,000 tree seedlings and 3,000 bamboo clumps have been planted by local people on their own farms, and farmers have been trained in sustainable organic agriculture techniques, in order to improve agricultural practices. The latter include compost-making, production and use of liquid manure, and homemade organic pesticides. The hope is that both people and birds will profit. Echuya Central Forest Reserve holds some threatened species, among them Grauer's Swamp Warbler *Bradypterus graueri*.

Source: [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)

### Marabou Storks killed in Kampala

Council workers in Kampala, Uganda, chopped down Marabou Storks *Leptoptilos crumeniferus* nesting trees on traffic islands in the city centre, leaving the chicks to die in the sun. Although the instructions had been to cut trees near electricity lines, NatureUganda, the local BirdLife partner, accused Kampala City Council of breaching its own environmental guidelines by not waiting until the nestlings had fledged. The scavenging Marabou Storks perform a valuable role in helping the city to deal with its rubbish problem. In the 1990s, a campaign to poison the birds was halted after a public outcry. Conservationists say that the storks will leave the centre and take up residence around dumps on the outskirts





Marabou Stork / Marabout d'Afrique  
*Leptoptilos crumeniferus*  
(Mark Anderson)

only when the city improves its refuse collection services.

Source: [www.earthwatch.org](http://www.earthwatch.org)

### Uluguru Bush-shrike found in Uluguru South Forest Reserve

The Critically Endangered Uluguru Bush-shrike *Malaconotus alius* was, until January 2007, believed to be confined to the Uluguru North Forest Reserve, between 1,200 and 1,500 m. Although Uluguru North and South Forest Reserves are separated by a gap of just 1.5 km, no certain records of the bush-shrike existed from the latter, and it was thought that the gap was a potential obstacle to movements of this canopy-reliant bird. A team from the Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania (WCST, BirdLife partner in Tanzania) has now repeatedly sighted the species in Uluguru South, at 1,739–1,885 m. A pair that originally came to playback of their calls was rarely seen together a month later, suggesting that the female might be attending a nest.

Source: [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)

### Indian Ocean islands

#### Unusual sex roles in Vasa Parrots

J. Ekstrom and his colleagues have described some very unusual family arrangements in the Greater Vasa Parrot *Coracopsis vasa* in Madagascar. Of 17 nests examined all contained young with at least two different

male parents. Only females actually attended the nests, but much of their food during incubation and chick-rearing is provided by the males. However, all females were visited by several males (not just that responsible for the brood) and each male was known to visit several widely separated females. There was no evidence of any close genetic relations between the various groups. It is unclear why such a situation has arisen, but the authors consider that it must represent some type of ecological constraint, probably related to food availability.

Source: *Ibis* 149, pp 313–320

### Madagascar protects important wetlands

In January 2007 the Mahavavy-Kinkony Wetlands, an Important Bird Area in western Madagascar, were granted protected status for two years. The area is a key site for Madagascar Teal *Anas bernieri*, Sakalava Rail *Amaurornis olivieri*, Madagascar Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus bernieri* and Madagascar Pond Heron *Ardeola idae*. It is also one of the last refuges for the Critically Endangered Madagascar Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vociferoides*.

Source: [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)



Madagascar Teal / Sarcelle de Bernier  
*Anas bernieri* (Adam Riley /  
Rockjumper Birding Tours)

### Forest loss and regrowth in Madagascar

To study the pattern of loss and regeneration of tropical dry forest in Madagascar, Thomas Elmqvist and co-workers analysed satellite images of a 5,500 km<sup>2</sup> area in the southern Androy region, taken in 1984, 1993 and 2000. They found a minor decrease of 7% in total forest cover during the period 1984–2000, but an overall net increase of 4% in 1993–2000. The highest forest loss occurred in an area with low human population density and long distances to markets, whilst a stable forest cover was found in the area with highest population density and good market access. The scientists discovered that forest loss mainly occurred in areas with insecure property rights, whilst those with well-defined property rights, forestry management regulations and local norms for practices such as livestock grazing showed either regenerating or stable forest cover.

Source: PLoS ONE 2(5): e402.  
doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0000402

### Southern Africa

#### Heronries in Botswana

Stephanie Tyler and Pete Hancock report on a major census of heronries that took place in 2005. The report collates and details a great deal of scattered information on sites used by herons and other waterbirds over the last several years. A second paper places particular emphasis on the discovery of six new breeding sites for Slaty Egret *Egretta vinaceigula* in the Okavango.

Source: *Babbler* 48, pp 18–39, 40–43

### Ten years of the Zululand Birding Route

One of Africa's most established and celebrated ecotourism initiatives, the Zululand Birding Route (ZBR), celebrates its tenth anniversary this year. Celebrations for the anniversary took place over three days earlier this year and included guided tours of the route, a film festival, Bird Fair and a Forest Birders Camp. The ZBR ini-

tiative has received worldwide praise for combining economic benefits to local communities (through 'bird-friendly' establishments and local bird guides), with environmental benefits relating to habitat protection and bird conservation. The ZBR, along with the established Greater Limpopo Birding Route, are worth an estimated US\$6.8 million per annum in direct economic value to the South African region.

Conservationists have pointed out that many of the 70 top 'birding sites' on the ZBR have been saved by this economic incentive toward conserving sites important for birds and biodiversity. The initiative was pioneered by BirdLife South Africa, who have provided training to local bird guides across birding routes, and marketed it to tourists via BirdLife Travel, a specialist travel agency established by BirdLife South Africa to plan itineraries that take in Important Bird Areas. The project's success is the result of a wide variety of stakeholder support, including corporates such as Rio Tinto and its local business, Richards Bay Minerals, as well as local government structures such as Uthungulu District Municipality. For further details visit [www.zbr.co.za](http://www.zbr.co.za) or BirdLife South Africa, [www.birdlife.org.za](http://www.birdlife.org.za).

Source: [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)

### Seabirds at risk in the Benguela

#### Current

BirdLife South Africa and WWF South Africa have released a report that for the first time assesses the impact of longline fishing on vulnerable species foraging in the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem, a rich and biodiverse ecosystem off the west coast of South Africa and the entire Namibian and Angolan coasts. The report estimates that as many as 34,000 seabirds, 4,200 sea turtles, and over seven million sharks, rays and skates are killed annually. The five migrant pelagic seabird species most susceptible to the impacts of fishing operations are Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophrys*, Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross *T. chlororhynchus* and



White-chinned Petrel / Puffin à menton blanc *Procellaria aequinoctialis*  
(Georges Oliosio)

Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross *T. carteri* (all Endangered), Shy Albatross *T. cauta* (Near Threatened) and White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis* (Vulnerable). Also seriously affected is the Cape Gannet *Morus capensis*, a Benguela endemic now listed as Vulnerable. "This report provides a platform from which informed decisions can be made that will reduce the impact on these threatened species in the region", said Samantha Petersen, manager of BirdLife South Africa's Seabird Programme and the WWF Responsible Fisheries Programme. The report provides practical recommendations, such as the use of bird-scaring lines with streamers attached which scare birds away from the baited hooks until they are underwater. Other measures simple to implement include the use of thawed rather than frozen bait and sufficiently weighted lines—both of which increase the sink rate of the main line; and setting the lines over the side of the boat, so that the hooks and bait are fully submerged by the time they reach the stern, where the birds congregate. The report makes specific recommendations for the three countries involved. In South Africa, a critical concern is the low level of compliance with fisheries permit conditions, which require fishers to use bird-scaring lines. In Namibia, bycatch miti-

gation needs to be included in fishing regulations. In Angola, where some fishermen deliberately catch Cape Gannets and White-chinned Petrels for food, efforts should be focused on developing alternative sustainable livelihoods for coastal communities. Petersen says the findings of the report need to be taken seriously by the governments of South Africa, Namibia and Angola, as well as by relevant inter-governmental regional fisheries organisations, as part of their commitment to implement a new Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) by 2010.

Source: [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)

### Internet resources

#### African plants website

Information on African plants can now be found at [www.aluka.org](http://www.aluka.org). The Aluka African Plants resource provides scientific and historical data, photographs of type specimens and a wide range of related images and data. The long-term goal is to build a comprehensive online research tool, assembling and linking presently scattered resources about African plants.



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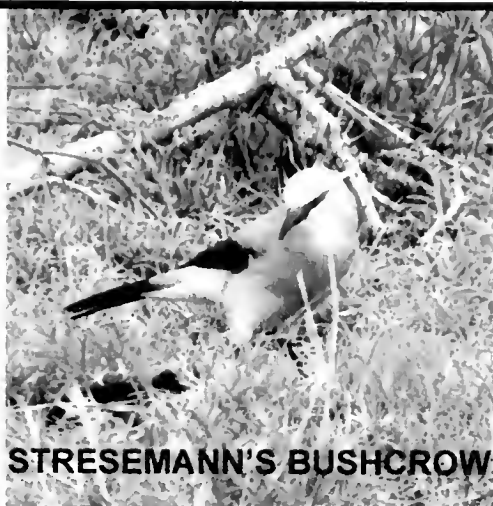
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# Birds to find: a review of 'lost', obscure and poorly known African bird species

Stuart Butchart

Des oiseaux à rechercher: un aperçu d'espèces d'oiseaux africains 'perdus', obscures et mal connues. En Afrique, il y a au moins neuf espèces d'oiseaux menacées d'extinction et huit classées comme 'Insuffisamment documentées' pour lesquelles il n'y pas de mentions récentes, dont quatre pour lesquelles il n'y a pas eu de données documentées depuis plus de 50 ans (l'Engoulevent de Prigogine *Caprimulgus prigoginei*, connu avec certitude d'un seul spécimen de 1955; l'Alouette d'Archer *Heteromirafra archeri*, dont la dernière donnée date de 1922; le Vanga de Blüntschi *Hypositta perdita*, connu de seulement deux spécimens de 1931; et l'Astrild à masque noire *Estrilda nigriloris*, observé pour la dernière fois en 1950). Les ornithologues peuvent contribuer à la conservation de ces espèces 'perdus', dans certains cas en commençant par confirmer leur survie. En visitant les zones et sites d'où ces espèces sont connues, ou pourraient se trouver, et en collectant des données sur la présence, l'abondance, l'habitat et l'écologie de ces espèces, les ornithologues peuvent fournir les données de base indispensables aux actions de conservation. Dans cet aperçu, l'auteur présente succinctement 17 espèces qui n'ont pas été observées récemment, ainsi qu'une sélection de 20 autres espèces peu connues qui sont menacées ou classées comme 'Insuffisamment documentées', parmi lesquelles l'énigmatique Engoulevent de Nechisar *Caprimulgus solala* qui n'est connu que d'une aile. La plupart des observateurs d'oiseaux en Afrique semblent visiter les mêmes sites déjà bien connus, tandis qu'il reste énormément d'occasions d'utiliser leurs compétences et ressources d'une manière qui serait plus utile à la conservation. Pourquoi ne pas quitter les sentiers battus à la recherche de ces espèces et contribuer ainsi à leur conservation?

**Summary.** There are at least nine threatened and eight Data Deficient bird species in Africa for which there are no recent records, including four which lack documented records for over 50 years (Prigogine's Nightjar *Caprimulgus prigoginei*, known with certainty only from a 1955 specimen; Archer's Lark *Heteromirafra archeri*, last recorded in 1922; Blüntschi's Vanga *Hypositta perdita*, known only from two specimens dated 1931; and Black-lored Waxbill *Estrilda nigriloris*, last recorded in 1950). Birdwatchers can make a valuable contribution to the conservation of these 'lost' species, in some cases initially by confirming their continued existence. Through visiting the areas and sites from where the species are known, or likely to occur, and by collecting data on the occurrence, abundance, habitat needs and basic ecology of these species, birders can provide the foundation from which conservation action can flow. In this review, I provide short summaries for the 17 species that have not been recently recorded, plus for a selection of 20 other poorly known threatened or Data Deficient species, including the enigmatic Nechisar Nightjar *Caprimulgus solala* which is known only from a wing. Most birders in Africa seem to visit the same well-established sites, but there is tremendous opportunity to apply their skills and resources in a way that will deliver significant conservation benefits. Why not venture off the beaten path, track down these species, and assist their conservation?

The corpse was partially squashed into the soil in a vehicle track, but it caught the attention of a group of British and Ethiopian wildlife surveyors during a night survey of Nechisar National Park, Ethiopia. As they prised it free, a few feathers blew away, but they salvaged a wing in good condition. It was about midnight on 3 September

1990, and this was the first and still the only time that the scientific and ornithological community has connected with what proved to be a previously undescribed species, Nechisar Nightjar *Caprimulgus solala* (Safford *et al.* 1995). Careful subsequent comparison with skins and other data indicated that the wing was highly distinctive and

fitted no known species. But no other records were made during almost 200 hours of night surveys in the park, despite field observations of over 100 individuals of four other nightjar species. The species has never been recorded in subsequent searches, though few of these have examined birds in the hand.

Rediscovering this species would be spectacular news, and tremendously exciting for any birder, as well as helping to further the nightjar's conservation. Such rediscoveries are perfectly possible, as many examples attest. The most recent was on 1 November 2006, when Lily-Arison René de Roland and Thé Seing Sam observed nine adult and four young Madagascar Pochards *Aythya innotata* at a site in northern Madagascar (R. Watson & L.-A. René de Roland *in litt.* 2006; see pp. 171–174). The species had almost been given up as extinct because a single male captured alive in August 1991 in the Lake Alaotra basin had been the only certain record since 1960, despite intensive searches (including major publicity campaigns) in that area.

Another example is Braun's (Orange-breasted) Bush-shrike *Laniarius brauni*, which was previously known from just two sites in the northern escarpment zone of Angola, and had not been recorded since 1957 (although a 1982 record of Crimson-breasted Gonolek *Laniarius atrococcineus* by Günther & Feiler [1986] may refer to this species: W. R. J. Dean *in litt.* 2005). Ian Sinclair and others mounted an expedition to track *L. brauni* down, and rediscovered it in February 2005 (Sinclair *et al.* 2007). Two other Angolan endemics have been put back on the map after no records for 30 years or more: Swierstra's Francolin *Francolinus swierstrai* and Gabela Helmet-shrike *Prionops gabela* (Ryan *et al.* 2004, Sinclair *et al.* 2004; M. S. L. Mills *in litt.* 2006). Yellow-throated Serin (Yellow-throated Seedeater) *Serinus flavigula* was refound after an even longer interval. It had been known from three 19th century specimens (the most recent dating from 1886) taken in a small area in Shoa province, eastern Ethiopia, until its rediscovery there in March 1989 by John Ash and Tom Gullick (Ash & Gullick 1990).

Here I provide short summaries for species that have not been recently recorded (generally, for 10+ years), including nine threatened and eight Data Deficient species, plus for a selection of six

other poorly known threatened species and all 14 Data Deficient species not currently under review for reclassification as Least Concern (see [www.birdlifeforums.org](http://www.birdlifeforums.org)). Data Deficient species are so obscure that it is not even possible to assign them meaningfully to a category of extinction risk on the IUCN Red List. Some may prove not to be threatened, but further data on them, and of course the threatened species, is urgently needed before their conservation needs can be determined and appropriate action devised. The accounts are divided by subregion, describing each species' status and distribution, gaps in knowledge, and provide tips on where, when and how birders should search for them. The species accounts are not intended to be definitive reviews, but rather to combine recent updates from the field with summaries of the information in the factsheets available on the BirdLife website ([www.birdlife.org/datazone/searchspecies](http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/searchspecies)). These build on the accounts in *Threatened Birds of the World* (BirdLife International 2000) and *Threatened Birds of the World 2004* CD-ROM (available free by e-mailing [science@birdlife.org](mailto:science@birdlife.org)). Further details on many can be found in Collar & Stuart (1985). The references cited below are mainly additional to those in the BirdLife factsheets.

Birdwatchers can easily make a valuable contribution to the conservation of these species. By visiting the areas and sites where the species are known from, or likely to occur, and by collecting basic information on their occurrence, abundance, habitat needs and basic ecology, they can provide the foundation from which conservation action can flow.

## North-east Africa

### Somali Pigeon *Columba oliviae*

Data Deficient. This locally common species is endemic to north-east Somalia, where it has been found from 45°E east to Cap Guardafui and south along the east coast to 07°30'N. It is a ground-feeding, rock-dwelling bird of arid, coastal regions, at altitudes of 75–750 m (once to 1,425 m), within 24 km of the coast. There have been records as recently as 2005 at a few sites, including around Galgalo (J. Miskell *in litt.* 2006). A potential threat may come from Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea*, which is still expanding its range very rapidly in Somalia and was observed for the first time in the Galgalo area in April 2005 (J. Miskell *in litt.*

**Table 1.** Poorly known African bird species discussed in the text. 'Recent' last records are defined as those since 2000.

**Tableau 1.** Espèces d'oiseaux africains peu connues présentées dans le texte. Les mentions 'récentes' sont définies comme celles postérieures à 2000.

Species	IUCN Red List category*	Distribution	Last recorded
Alaotra Grebe <i>Tachybaptus rufolavatus</i>	CR(PE)	Madagascar	1988
Swierstra's Francolin <i>Francolinus swierstrai</i>	VU	Angola	Recent
Somali Pigeon <i>Columba oliviae</i>	DD	Somalia	Recent
Congo Bay Owl <i>Phodilus prigoginei</i>	EN	Congo-Kinshasa	1996
Anjouan Scops Owl <i>Otus capnodes</i>	CR	Comoros	Recent
Mohéli Scops Owl <i>Otus moheliensis</i>	CR	Comoros	Recent
Grand Comoro Scops Owl <i>Otus pauliani</i>	CR	Comoros	Recent
Maned Owl <i>Jubula lettii</i>	DD	Liberia to Congo-Kinshasa	Recent
Prigogine's Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus prigoginei</i>	CR	Congo-Kinshasa (Cameroon?, Congo-Brazzaville?)	1955 (type-specimen; plus unconfirmed records 1996–97)
Nechisar Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus solala</i>	VU	Ethiopia	1990 (type-specimen)
Schouteden's Swift <i>Schoutedenapus schoutedeni</i>	VU	Congo-Kinshasa (Uganda?)	1972 (plus more recent unconfirmed records)
Fernando Po Swift <i>Apus sladeniae</i>	DD	Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Angola	1961 (unconfirmed record in 1998)
White-chested Tinkerbird <i>Pogoniulus makawai</i>	DD	Zambia	1964 (type-specimen)
Yellow-footed Honeyguide <i>Melignomon eisentrauti</i>	DD	Guinea to Cameroon	Recent
Williams's Lark <i>Mirafrja williamsi</i>	DD	Kenya	Recent
Friedmann's Lark <i>Mirafrja pulpa</i>	DD	Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania	Recent
Archer's Lark <i>Heteromirafrja archeri</i>	CR	Somalia (Ethiopia?)	1922
Obbia Lark <i>Spizocorys obbiensis</i>	DD	Somalia	Recent
Red Sea Swallow <i>Hirundo perdita</i>	DD	Sudan, (Eritrea?)	1994 (type-specimen)
Long-tailed Pipit <i>Anthus longicaudatus</i>	DD	South Africa, Botswana, Zambia	Recent
Eastern Wattled Cuckoo-shrike <i>Lobotos oriolinus</i>	DD	Cameroon, Gabon, Congo, Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville	Recent
Liberian Greenbul <i>Phyllastrephus leucolepis</i>	CR	Liberia	1985
Sombre Chat <i>Cercomela dubia</i>	DD	Ethiopia, Somalia	Recent
Somali Thrush <i>Turdus ludoviciae</i>	CR	Somalia	Recent
Short-billed Crombec <i>Sylvietta philippae</i>	DD	Somalia, Ethiopia	Recent
Tana River Cisticola <i>Cisticola restrictus</i>	DD	Kenya	1962
Slender-tailed Cisticola <i>Cisticola melanurus</i>	DD	Angola, Congo-Brazzaville	Recent
Kabobo Apalis <i>Apalis kaboboensis</i>	DD	Congo-Brazzaville	?
Tessmann's Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa tessmanni</i>	DD	Sierra Leone to Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea	Recent
Monteiro's Bush-shrike <i>Malaconotus monteiri</i>	DD	Angola, Cameroon	Recent
Bulo Burti Boubou <i>Laniarius liberatus</i>	CR	Somalia	1990 (type-specimen)
Bluntschli's Vanga <i>Hypositta perdita</i>	DD	Madagascar	1931 (type-specimens)
Emerald Starling <i>Lamprotorornis (Coccycolius) iris</i>	DD	Guinea, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire	Recent
Bates's Weaver <i>Ploceus batesi</i>	EN	Cameroon	1996
Lake Lufira Weaver <i>Ploceus ruweti</i>	DD	Congo-Brazzaville	1960
Golden-naped Weaver <i>Ploceus aureonucha</i>	EN	Congo-Brazzaville	1994
Yellow-legged Weaver <i>Ploceus flavipes</i>	VU	Congo-Brazzaville	Recent
Black-lored Waxbill <i>Estrilda nigriloris</i>	DD	Congo-Brazzaville	1950

\* IUCN categories are as follows: CR (PE) = Critically Endangered (Possibly Extinct), CR = Critically Endangered, EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable, and DD = Data Deficient.

2006). How this may affect the Somali Pigeon is unknown. No other threats have been identified, but given the species' small range and paucity of recent data, its status is uncertain. Once the security situation permits, birders could contribute significantly to our knowledge by collecting information on its abundance, distribution, ecology and possible threats.

#### **Nechisar Nightjar** *Caprimulgus solala*

Vulnerable. This must rate as the least-known bird species in the world, because all the information we have is derived from a single wing (hence the species name *solala*, meaning 'one wing') salvaged from a road corpse on the Nechisar Plains, southern Ethiopia, in 1990 (Safford *et al.* 1995). The dead bird was found on a dirt road in a completely treeless area of the plains, which are a gently undulating 270-km<sup>2</sup> area of natural short grassland on black-lava soil, at 1,200 m on the Rift Valley floor. The plains are isolated by bushland from any similar short-grass habitat. They lie within Nechisar National Park, but this is threatened by heavy resource-use, including excessive grazing by domestic livestock, rapid clearance of trees for fuel and buildings in the local town of Arba Minch, and illegal fires (although the park management has recently been assumed by the charitable foundation African Parks Conservation, which may improve the situation).

Identifying this species in the field may prove difficult, because its overall appearance and any sexual differences are unknown. However, given the wing's distinctiveness, it is possible that the species would be identifiable in the field. Birders searching for it should be aware that critical examination of the wing pattern will be necessary to prove identification, and this may be difficult without capturing a bird. The specimen had white tips to at least the outer two tail-feathers, a rounded wing, with the wing-coverts marked by large buff spots, and a broad buffish-white band, almost midway along the outer wing, across the four outer primaries (and on the inner web only of the outermost primary). The key point is that the patch lies exceptionally far up the wing (i.e. towards to the carpal joint), especially relative to the (strong and easily seen) emargination in the outer primaries (especially P9, the last but one; Safford *et al.* 1995, R. J. Safford *in litt.* 2006; see Fig. 3). The voice is unknown, but Jackson (2002)

suggested that it is a member of the 'churring' (as opposed to 'whistling') species-group. Searchers should familiarise themselves with the voices of all nightjars known from the area, in the hope of hearing one that sounds different (which they will need to photograph well or even catch to confirm the identification). Although Forero & Tella (1997) questioned the validity of this taxon, Safford *et al.* (1997) convincingly reaffirmed the case for treating it specifically.

#### **Archer's Lark** *Heteromirafra archeri*

Critically Endangered. Known only from open, fairly short grassland in an exceptionally restricted area, from Jifa Medir to Ban Wujaleh, west of Hargeisa in north-west Somalia, along the Ethiopian frontier. A claim from north-west of Buramo in 1955 should be considered unconfirmed. It was not seen at Ban Wujaleh, or in adjacent Ethiopia, during five visits to the region between the 1970s and 1990s, nor on ten occasions in 1996–2006 (J. Miskell *in litt.* 2006). A possible sighting was reported from between Hargeisa and Tug Wujaleh in December 2003 (G. Mulholland *in litt.* 2004), and another was claimed at Jijiga, extreme eastern Ethiopia in 2004 (H. Shirihihi *in litt.* 2004), but both await documentation. This species' secretive habits make it very difficult to observe: it avoids open spaces, creeps through grass cover, and flies reluctantly. Intensive searches are needed along the Ethiopian–Somali border, perhaps in April–May when it may be singing and more conspicuous (nests have been found in June, but note that the timing of rains can be erratic in this region). The song is undescribed, but the most similar species in the same area, Singing Bush Lark *Mirafra cantillans*, differs in its longer tail, rusty-fringed primaries and secondaries, and pale-fringed mantle and wing-coverts.

#### **Obbia Lark** *Spizocorys obbiensis*

Data Deficient. This lark is restricted to a narrow coastal strip of south-east Somalia, where it occurs in large, stable, vegetated dunes. It is known from c.570 km of coast, from Halhambe to 47 km south of Jirriiban, being restricted to a strip only c.1 km wide in the south but occurs up to 40 km inland in the north. The most recent sighting was in April 2006, when several pairs were seen at Ceel Dheer and Mareeg (J. Miskell *in litt.* 2006). The



species has been reported as abundant, being found in pairs, small parties and occasionally flocks of up to 30. Though the species can survive in heavily grazed habitat, it is possible that further intensification of grazing and increased demand for firewood, particularly in areas close to Mogadishu, will lead to the destabilisation of dunes and consequent habitat degradation. However, further information on this and other potential threats is needed to inform conservation assessments.

### **Red Sea Swallow *Hirundo perdita***

Data Deficient. This enigmatic species is known only from the type-specimen, found dead in May 1984 at Sanganeb lighthouse, north-east of Port Sudan, Sudan. Its scientific name—meaning ‘the lost swallow’—is highly apposite, as there have been no more confirmed records. The species’ preferred habitat is unknown, but its morphology is similar to the ‘cliff swallow’ group of species, whose other members prefer open country (e.g. grassland or montane areas), often near cliffs and/or water and/or human habitation. It is therefore judged most likely to be found in the Red Sea hills of Sudan or Eritrea, or possibly (because two pale-rumped swallows were seen flying out over the Red Sea towards Jeddah, just before the discovery of the type: Madge & Redman 1989) in the coastal hills of western Saudi Arabia north of Jeddah. Unidentified cliff swallows, possibly this species, have been observed in Ethiopia in the Rift Valley at Lake Langano (c.20 in November 1988: Madge & Redman 1989) and Awash National Park (six in November 1988: Madge & Redman 1989, Turner & Rose 1989; 12 in September 1993: Atkins & Harvey 1994), and in the western highlands at Gibe Gorge (one in October 1993: Atkins & Harvey 1994, and four in October 1999: Vermeulen 2000) and Jimma (one in March 1994: Atkins & Harvey 1994), though these birds are more likely to represent an undescribed taxon because they differ in a number of plumage features from *perdita*. Birders should pay careful attention to all swallows in the Horn of Africa, looking out for a ‘cliff swallow’ with a steely blue crown, blackish forehead and lores, grey rump, white chin and bluish-black throat and upper breast.

### **Sombre Chat *Cercomela dubia***

Data Deficient. A rare and little-known species of east-central Ethiopia and Somalia. In Ethiopia, there are records from the Awash Valley, including Awash National Park, eastwards, whilst in Somalia there is a single old record from Mt Wagar (it has not been found there subsequently, despite searches: J. Miskell *in litt.* 2006). The species seems to favour areas of rock and scrub, in common with the closely related and similar-looking Brown-tailed Chat *C. scotocerca* and Blackstart *C. melanura*, so it may be overlooked. Indeed, many observations at Awash National Park are likely to have involved misidentifications of Brown-tailed Chat (C. Spottiswoode *in litt.* 2007). Birders should search areas of rocky slopes with grass and scrub, checking all chats very carefully for this species’ diagnostic combination of dark-brown tail, greyish/brownish-white vent and strong bill. Photographic confirmation of records is desirable.

### **Short-billed Crombec *Sylvietta philippae***

Data Deficient. This species is found in north-west and west Somalia and adjacent parts of Ethiopia up to 80 km from the border (e.g. at Cole in June 2006: L. D. C. Fishpool *in litt.* 2006), although it is suspected to be more widespread in Ethiopia. There are also several records in the Bogol Manyo area of south-east Somalia (J. S. Ash *in litt.* 2007). It occurs in fairly dense thickets of *Acacia* and *Commiphora* on rocky ground and red sandy soil in semi-desert. *S. philippae* has been noted as fairly common at c.300 m, and ranges up to 900 m. In Somalia it has been described as widespread but not particularly common, and given the size of its range the species may not be at risk (J. Miskell *in litt.* 2006). However, as this crombec appears to be restricted to denser areas of thicket it could be sensitive to habitat alteration due to firewood collection or grazing. Further information on the species’ abundance and sensitivity to habitat disturbance is required. Short-billed Crombec is similar to Somali Crombec *S. isabellina* but has pale yellow rather than pale buff underparts, and a shorter bill. It also could be confused with Yellow-vented Eremomela *Eremomela flavicrissalis*, but has a different shape, with a shorter tail, more extensive yellow on the underparts, and longer reddish-brown (not grey) legs and dark ear-coverts contrasting with a paler supercilium.



### **Bulo Burti Boubou** *Laniarius liberatus*

Critically Endangered. This enigmatic species (Fig. 8) aroused great controversy when it was described from blood and feather samples in 1991 (e.g. Smith *et al.* 1991, Peterson & Lanyon 1992, Banks *et al.* 1993, Collar 1999). The only known individual was first seen in August 1988, in *Acacia* scrub within the grounds of a hospital at Bulo Burti (also spelt Buulobarde or Buuloburti), 140 km inland on the Shabeelle River in central Somalia. It was mist-netted in January 1989 and, rather than being collected as a voucher specimen, released at Balcad Nature Reserve (as close to its site of capture as possible to access), in March 1990, following 14 months in captivity (mostly in Germany). Searches in the Bulo Burti area in July 1989 and April 1990 failed to produce further records (J. Miskell *in litt.* 2006). The validity of the taxon has been questioned, and it may represent a hybrid. One parent may be Red-naped Bush-shrike *L. ruficeps*, which occurs both east and north of Bulo Burti, and has a similar plumage pattern (J. Miskell *in litt.* 2006). The other parent may be a black form, described as *L. erlangeri* by Reichenow but subsequently treated as a morph of Tropical Boubou *L. aethiopicus*, which is known from the Shabeelle Valley near Bulo Burti (its call differs from that of typical Tropical Boubou, and it may well represent a separate species; J. Miskell *in litt.* 2006). Further DNA studies (including, critically, samples from the black morph of Tropical Boubou) are required to resolve this issue, but in the interim it is prudent to continue to regard Bulo Burti Boubou as a high conservation priority. When the security situation permits, *Acacia* habitat in the environs of Bulo Burti and more widely should be searched for the species. It resembles Red-naped Bush-shrike, but lacks a red nape, has a black not grey mantle, and a buffy-yellow wash to the throat and breast.

### **West and Central Africa**

#### **Swierstra's Francolin** *Francolinus swierstrai*

Vulnerable. This Angolan endemic was formerly uncommon in the montane west of the country, from Tundavala in Huila district north to Cariango in Cuanza Sul district, on inselbergs in Huambo district and in the Bailundu Highlands.

In the latter area, Mt Moco holds the most remaining forest, although this is disappearing rapidly and is now confined to patches in deep ravines. The species had apparently not been recorded since 1971 (Pinto 1983) until seven were seen (and another pair/group heard) by Michael Mills during six days at Mt Moco in August 2005 (M. S. L. Mills *in litt.* 2006). One group was in montane forest understorey, but the others were in tall grass and other rank growth. The species is known mainly from forest and forest edge, but is also recorded from rocky and grassy mountainsides and tall-grass savannas on mountain tops. Sound-recordings made by Mills may prove useful in future searches, which are needed to determine the species' current distribution, population size and threats.

#### **Congo Bay Owl** *Phodilus prigoginei*

Endangered. Not recorded since the type-specimen was collected in 1951 at Muusi, in the Itombwe Mountains, Congo-Kinshasa, until its rediscovery in 1996, when a female was mist-netted in the extreme south-east corner of Itombwe Forest, c.95 km to the south (Omari *et al.* 1999; Fig. 5). The species may require a mosaic of grassland and either montane or bamboo forest: the type-specimen was collected at 2,430 m in a grassy clearing, whilst the 1996 record was at 1,830 m in montane gallery forest adjacent to grass and bush. Itombwe is not the only forest in Central Africa with a large area of highland forest/grassland habitat, and the species possibly occurs elsewhere. There is an unconfirmed sighting in Burundi from 1974, and calls of an unidentified owl tape-recorded in Nyungwe Forest, Rwanda, in 1990 may refer to this species (Dowsett-Lemaire 1990; recording available from the British Library Sound Archive, London, UK). König *et al.* (1999) noted that photographs of the 1996 bird show a heart-shaped facial disc typical of *Tyto* owls, rather than that of the only congener, Oriental Bay Owl *Phodilus badius*. Birders should undertake nocturnal surveys of appropriate habitat mosaics in Congo-Kinshasa and adjacent countries, for a rich, chestnut-brown owl (but be aware that the male plumage is unknown), and listen for long, mournful whistles or other calls that do not match known species. Sound-recording equipment will be essential to track down this beautiful nightbird.

### Maned Owl *Jubula lettii*

Data Deficient. Known from apparently only 14 sites in Liberia (Nimba and Zwedru), Côte d'Ivoire (Taï), Ghana (an old record from Ejura), Cameroon (Korup, Mt Rata and Rumpi Hills, Mt Cameroon, Mokoko-Onge and Nlonako Mountain [Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1999a]), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon (Gamba, Lopé and M'Passa), Congo-Brazzaville (Béna), and Congo-Kinshasa (Okapi Faunal Reserve, Itombwe). Although it is reported as rare in parts of its range, the species may simply be under-recorded. The call is unknown (König *et al.* 1999). Maned Owl is thought to prefer tall closed-canopy rainforest, not semi-evergreen or open-canopy forest, and has never been recorded outside forest or forest clearings. Further information is needed to establish its true range, population size and habitat preferences.

### Prigogine's Nightjar *Caprimulgus prigoginei*

Endangered. Like Nechisar Nightjar, this caprimulgid is also known only from a single specimen, albeit a complete one: a female collected in August 1955 at Malenge, in the Itombwe Mountains of eastern Congo-Kinshasa (Curry-Lindahl 1960, Louette 1990). However, there have been a number of recent records of nightjars that probably refer to this species: at Itombwe, eastern Congo-Kinshasa (in April 1996 by T. Butynski: Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1998a), Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, northern Congo-Brazzaville (in April 1996, plus three in May 1997: Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1998a), Odzala National Park, Congo-Brazzaville (in April 1994: F. Dowsett-Lemaire *in litt.* 2006), Lobéké Faunal Reserve, Cameroon (in April 1997: Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2000), and Nki Faunal Reserve, Cameroon (at two locations, in December 1997 and January 1998: Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1998b). All gave a dry staccato song somewhat reminiscent of Swamp Nightjar *C. natalensis*, but lower pitched and of a different timbre. The Lobéké bird responded to the tape made in Itombwe. None was seen apart from one at Nouabalé-Ndoki which was observed in flight at close range, at dusk, and appeared small and dark (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1998a; F. Dowsett-Lemaire *in litt.* 2007). The birds in Nouabalé-Ndoki were found in the same habitat as Brown Nightjar *C. binotatus* (open-canopy for-

est), but the territories of the two species did not appear to overlap (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1998a). The report by Brosset & Erard (1986) of Swamp Nightjar being heard regularly during April–May 1985 in riverside forest clearings near M'Passa, in Invindo, Gabon, probably refers to Prigogine's Nightjar also (F. Dowsett-Lemaire *in litt.* 2006). The type-specimen was taken in transitional forest (between lowland and montane) at 1,280 m, so the species may equally well be found in either lowland or montane forest. It should be sought in the Itombwe Mountains and more widely in Congo-Kinshasa, Cameroon and Congo-Brazzaville, using mist-nets, sound-recording equipment and the recordings from Congo-Brazzaville (which were published in Ranft & Cleere 1998).

### Schouteden's Swift *Schoutedenapus schoutedeni*

Vulnerable. This swift is known with certainty from only five specimens taken east and north-east of the Itombwe Mountains, eastern Congo-Kinshasa, where it is presumably resident. However, there are possible sightings from Bwindi Forest, Uganda (near the border with Congo-Kinshasa), and Mt Tshiaberimu, north-west of Lake Edward, Congo-Kinshasa (Sarmiento & Butynski 1997, T. Butynski *in litt.* 1999). The species is known from clearings in transitional and lowland forest, at c.1,000–1,470 m, and the recent possible sightings indicate that it may also be found over montane forest (to 2,700 m). The difficulty facing anyone trying to track down this species is its identification. It is dark-coloured, probably appearing all black in the field, with a medium-forked tail. It will probably be extremely difficult to separate in the field from Scarce Swift *S. myoptilus*, but Schouteden's has darker plumage, particularly on the throat, which appears only marginally paler than the rest of the underparts, whereas Scarce often has an extensive pale grey throat (Chantler & Driessens 1995). Given its close structural similarity to Scarce Swift, *schoutedeni* probably has similar behaviour and perhaps calls (short trills, followed by a metallic click, weak nasal twitterings, and then more metallic clicks: Chantler & Driessens 1995). Like Scarce Swift, it is probably fairly straightforward to separate from Common Swift *Apus apus* by its distinctive jizz, including long thin tail, narrow wings with thin primaries tapering sharply from the secondaries,

and less elegant flight action, with stiff, downward-angled wings when gliding, recalling *Collocalia* spp. (Chantler & Driessens 1995). Without specimens, prolonged observations and photographs will be necessary to support any claims, and recordings of any calls would also be useful.

**Fernando Po Swift** *Apus sladeniae*

Data Deficient. Known from south-east Nigeria (one record in 1961), the Bakossi Mountains in west Cameroon (one record in 1907), Bioko (=Fernando Po), Equatorial Guinea (six collected in 1903–04, but no subsequent records) and Mt Moco in Angola (two specimens from 1931, plus 2005 and 2006 records from Mount Soque: Mills & Dean submitted; M. S. L. Mills *in litt.* 2006). There is an unconfirmed sighting of *c.*10 in January 1998, at Moca in Monte Alen National Park, mainland Equatorial Guinea (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1999b). It has been suggested that the species breeds on Bioko and visits the mainland during the non-breeding season, but the population in Angola (if really involving the same taxon) is presumably resident. The taxonomic status of *sladeniae* requires validation: although Dowsett & Forbes-Watson (1993) accord it specific status, Fry *et al.* (1988), Chantler & Driessens (1995) and Dickinson (2003) all treat it as a race of Black Swift *Apus barbatus*. Until the possibility of it being a valid species has been discounted, birders should look for the taxon throughout its possible range (in particular on Bioko), checking all Black Swifts for dark individuals lacking any grey-white feathering on the throat.

**Yellow-footed Honeyguide** *Melignomon eisentrauti*

Data Deficient. Known from Sierra Leone (Gola Forest: Allport *et al.* 1989, Tiwai Island in October 2005 and near Gola Reserve in September 2005: J. Lindsell *in litt.* 2007, with two aural records in unlogged forest in February 2007: F. Dowsett-Lemaire *in litt.* 2007), Liberia (rare resident recorded from near Mt Nimba, the Wonegizi Mountains, North Lorma National Forest [Demey 2007], the slopes of Mt Balagizi and south of Vahun), Côte d'Ivoire (Taï Forest, Mt Peko, Marahoué National Park, Cavally and Géoulé Forest Reserves [Rainey *et al.* 2003], and most recently, Anguédédou Forest Reserve, plus

probably Banco National Park: Lachenaud 2006), Ghana (Bura River Forest Reserve, Kakum National Park and Atewa Range, most recently in 2005: F. Dowsett-Lemaire *in litt.* 2006), Nigeria (Cross River National Park in 2004: Anon. 2005; L. D. C. Fishpool *in litt.* 2006), and Cameroon (two specimens from 1956–57, with more recent records in Nta'ali and Rumpi Hills [Green & Rodewald 1996] and Bachuo Akagbe, Mamfe [Demey 2000]). It is probably more widespread in West Africa and may be easily overlooked, but is undoubtedly rare and very poorly known. This honeyguide is found in the mid-strata and canopy of semi-deciduous and evergreen lowland forest, and is recorded mainly from primary or old secondary forest, but not in heavily degraded habitat. The species is presumably a brood-parasite, but its host/s is unknown. Although habitat throughout its range is under much pressure due to logging, agricultural encroachment and mining, the lack of records and uncertainty over its dependence on primary forest makes assessment as to whether the population is declining rapidly impossible. Further surveys are required, and these should be facilitated by the recent documentation of the species' characteristic song: a series of repeated loud, strident notes, each rising in pitch, repeated at a rate of one per second, with the series slightly descending and slowing towards the end (Rainey *et al.* 2003; F. Dowsett-Lemaire *in litt.* 2007). With a better understanding of the species' distribution and habitat requirements, it may well prove to be Least Concern, or perhaps Near Threatened, owing to a small and declining global population.

**Eastern Wattled Cuckoo-shrike** *Lobotos oriolinus*

Data Deficient. This species is known from the equatorial forests of south-east Nigeria (Ash *et al.* 1989, now considered confirmed: R. J. Dowsett *in litt.* 2007), southern Cameroon, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, the south-western Central African Republic, and eastern and north-eastern Congo-Kinshasa, but there are very few sightings throughout this range. It is found at low altitudes, inhabiting the tops of mature trees in primary, secondary and transitional forest, and has also been recorded at the edge of logged forest in Gabon. Despite its potentially wide range and unobtrusive behaviour, the species is probably very rare, although the reasons for this are unclear. It is not

immediately threatened by habitat loss as *oriolina* appears to prefer secondary forest. Data are needed to clarify its abundance, distribution and the threats the species faces. Birders should be aware that in brief or incomplete views this cuckoo-shrike could be mistaken for a forest oriole *Oriolus* spp.

#### **Liberian Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus leucolepis*

Critically Endangered. This obscure greenbul was described in 1985 on the basis of one specimen and sightings from two forest patches in Zwedru Important Bird Area, 20 km north-west of the town of the same name, near the Cavalla River, Grand Gedeh county, in south-east Liberia (Gatter 1985). Despite much field work in Liberia (pre-civil war) and adjacent countries, there have been no subsequent records, so the taxon is clearly very rare. It has been found in transitional forest between evergreen and semi-deciduous, and is known to follow mixed-species flocks and forage on branches near trunks in the mid- and understorey, often while flicking its partly-opened wings. It may simply represent an aberrant form of Icterine Greenbul *P. icterinus*, to which it appears identical apart from having cream spots on the tips of the secondaries and secondary-coverts (L. D. C. Fishpool pers. comm. 2007). However, pending resolution of its taxonomic status, and once security in the region stabilises, birders should search for this greenbul in and around Zwedru, seeking mixed-species flocks in the appropriate habitat. The much larger Western (Yellow-spotted) Nicator *Nicator chloris* has greyish, not yellowish, underparts. Unfortunately, the vocalisations of Liberian Greenbul are unknown.

#### **Slender-tailed (Black-tailed) Cisticola** *Cisticola melanurus*

Data Deficient. This cisticola is a poorly known inhabitant of north-eastern Angola, from Malanje to western Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul provinces (most recently in February 2005, c.30 km north of Calandula: Sinclair *et al.* 2007), and south-east Congo-Kinshasa, from Gungu in Kwango (Pay Kikwanga) and Shaba (upper Lufupa River and Nasondoye). However, further clarification of its range is needed, as there are relatively few specimens, and some claims may have resulted from confusion with Tabora (Long-tailed) Cisticola *C. angusticauda*, which apparently can show a black

tail and behave similarly to Slender-tailed (*P. Leonard in litt.* 2006). Slender-tailed Cisticola occurs in climax miombo woodland, where it is found in grassy patches and in the canopy of smaller trees, and forages in pairs for insects. Sinclair *et al.* (2007) report that it has characteristic wing-flicking and -snapping behaviour when disturbed, but Tabora Cisticola and other congeners exhibit very similar behaviour (*P. Leonard in litt.* 2006, F. Dowsett-Lemaire *in litt.* 2007). The key distinguishing feature is that the five outer primaries (excluding the vestigial outermost) have broad, glossy black, heavily melanised, stiff rachi (Irwin 1991), but this would require in-the-hand examination. The taxon may simply represent a form of Piping Cisticola *C. fulvicapilla* (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1993), but pending clarification of this (and in particular the reported sympatry in Angola), data are urgently needed on Slender-tailed's distribution, abundance, ecology and the extent to which it may be suffering from habitat destruction. To be certain of the identification, birds will need to be captured and examined in the hand.

#### **Kabobo Apalis** *Apalis kaboboensis*

Data Deficient. Currently treated by BirdLife International as specifically distinct from Chestnut-throated Apalis *A. porphyrolaema* following Sibley & Monroe (1990), but treated as conspecific by most other authorities and its taxonomic status is under review by BirdLife. The taxon is known only from Mt Kabobo, west of Lake Tanganyika, in eastern Congo-Kinshasa, where suitable habitat occupies no more than 2,000 km. It is found in the canopy of montane forest, where it has been recorded at 1,600–2,480 m. There is no recent information on its habitat, but Chestnut-throated Apalis occurs in montane forest, second growth, gallery forest, forest edge, medium-sized trees and liana tangles. Like that species, *kaboboensis* probably occurs in pairs and small family parties. Montane forest on Mt Kabobo is entirely unprotected and information on the status of the habitat there is urgently needed.

#### **Tessmann's Flycatcher** *Muscicapa tessmanni*

Data Deficient. This flycatcher is known from Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria (no recent records), Cameroon, Congo-

Kinshasa and mainland Equatorial Guinea. It appears to be rare throughout much of the range, though it is locally common in at least some areas, e.g., in and around Bia National Park, west Ghana (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2005). The species has possibly been overlooked owing to its similarities to Dusky-blue Flycatcher *M. comitata*. Tessmann's, which has a more restricted range and is much less common, is larger, paler below, stronger billed, lacks the white lores and contrasting white throat of Dusky-blue, and has a more musical song (F. Dowsett-Lemaire *in litt.* 2007). It occurs at mid levels (5–15 m) in forest with small gaps in the canopy, appears to be less uncommon in semi-evergreen than evergreen forest, and apparently does not normally occur in heavily degraded or secondary habitat (F. Dowsett-Lemaire *in litt.* 2007). Some records claimed in such habitat may refer to Dusky-blue Flycatcher (F. Dowsett-Lemaire *in litt.* 2007). The species is threatened by conversion of forest to more intensive farms and plantations. However, more information is needed on its status, population size and trends.

#### **Monteiro's Bush-shrike** *Malaconotus monteiri*

Data Deficient. Occurs in gallery and coffee forest but is known only from relatively few sites on the escarpment of Angola, although surveys in 2005 found the species to be more widespread than previously thought, from the Dande River south to Gungo (Mills & Dean submitted). Sinclair *et al.* (2004) found it to be thinly distributed but surprisingly common at Kumbira Forest in both near-pristine forest and 'quite degraded secondary scrub' (Fig. 9). In Cameroon, a 19th century specimen from Mt Cameroon, a possible record on Mt Kupe in 1992 (Andrews 1994), and an unconfirmed report from Mt Cameroon in 1997 (Demey 1997) all probably refer to a colour morph of Green-breasted Bush-shrike *M. gladiator* (Williams 1998; M. S. L. Mills *in litt.* 2006, F. Dowsett-Lemaire *in litt.* 2007). Pending taxonomic clarification, birders in Cameroon should continue to search for the taxon, listening for a series of drawn-out mournful whistles similar to some of those given by Green-breasted Bush-shrike and, if seen, eliminating the possibility of the rare yellow-breasted morph of Fiery-breasted Bush-shrike *M. cruentus*, which can be separated by the lack of yellow tips to the wing-coverts, smaller yellow tips to

the tertials and rather different call (Williams 1998). In Angola, surveys are required to clarify its distribution, abundance, ecology and threats. Plumage features (including the pale lores and dark eyes) are most useful for distinguishing Monteiro's from Grey-headed Bush-shrike *M. blanchoti* which has virtually identical vocalisations (Sinclair *et al.* 2004).

#### **Emerald (Iris Glossy) Starling** *Lamprolornis (Coccycolius) iris*

Data Deficient. Known from western and south-eastern Guinea, Sierra Leone and eastern Côte d'Ivoire, where it is found in orchard bush and wooded and open savannas, keeping to the tops of tall trees. The species shuns forests but is occasionally found at the edge of gallery forest. Recent reports have included: flocks of up to 100 at Mt Sangbé National Park, Côte d'Ivoire, in March–May 2001 (Demey 2001), and in June 2002 (Demey 2003); a single bird plus a flock of ten in wooded savanna at two sites in Pic de Fon Forest Reserve, Guinea, in November–December 2002 (Demey & Rainey 2004); and several recent records from Sierra Leone (A. Siaka *per* F. Dowsett-Lemaire *in litt.* 2007), including 'a small flock' at Bumbuna in 2005 (Ryan 2006) and flocks of two and 15 on the Bumbuna–Magbuaka road in December 2006 (Hornbuckle 2007). The species appears to be rather localised and generally scarce, and the impact on the population of large numbers caught for the wild bird trade is unknown (R. Wilkinson *in litt.* 1998). Further information is needed to clarify the species' abundance, distribution and threats, and birders could make an important contribution to this.

#### **Bates's Weaver** *Ploceus batesi*

Endangered. This attractive weaver is inexplicably rare in southern and western Cameroon, occurring in a narrow belt from Limbe, at the foot of Mt Cameroon, east to Moloundou. Since 1990, when there were two records at Mt Kupe, it has only been seen twice, near Dja Game Reserve at Somalomo on the north-west boundary of the reserve in 1995, and at Shwani, 12 km from Somalomo, in 1996 (R. Fotso *in litt.* 1999). Subsequent searches of Mt Kupe failed to relocate the species, as did surveys in 1998–2001 in west and south-east Cameroon (F. Dowsett-Lemaire *in litt.* 2007). It occurs in lowland rainforest, though

the recent records were in secondary forest and forest edge, including degraded forest around villages. *P. batesi* occurs singly and in pairs, and one of Bates's (1930) records was in a mixed-species flock; it appears to forage on insects, bark-gleaning in the manner of Preuss's Weaver *P. preussi*, with which it could conceivably compete (Bates 1930, Bannerman 1949). The voice is unknown. Birders in southern Cameroon should be particularly vigilant for this very distinctive forest weaver as we urgently need to know more concerning its distribution, population size, ecology and possible threats.

### Three Congo weavers

Congo-Kinshasa harbours three species of weaver that are very poorly known. The Data Deficient **Lake Lufira Weaver** *Ploceus ruweti* is restricted to Lake Lufira in the south, where it was common in 1960 (when the type-specimen was collected), but there is no recent information on its status. It occurs in swamps bordering Lake Lufira, in reedbeds of *Phragmites* and *Typha*, interspersed with bushes and *Sesbania leptocarpa*. The breeding season is January–April and it nests in colonies of up to 20 pairs. **Golden-naped Weaver** *P. aureonucha* (Endangered) and **Yellow-legged Weaver** *P. flavipes* (Vulnerable) are both known from Ituri Forest, eastern Congo-Kinshasa. Golden-naped occurs in a small area between Mawambi, Irumu and Beni, but it had not been recorded since 1926 until several records in 1986, including a flock of 60 at Epulu (M. C. Catsis *in litt.* 1989, 1994), followed by a record of a pair with young at the same locality in 1994 (M. Languy *in litt.* 1994). However, M. Wilson *et al.* (*in litt.* 2006) observed a pair in Semliki Valley National Park, Uganda, in August 2006, extending the known range 80 km east (Wilson *et al.* 2007). Yellow-legged has a slightly larger range within Ituri, from Avakubi east to Simbo and Campi y Wanbuti, south to Ukaika, thence east to Lima, Tungudu and Makayobe (Collar & Stuart 1985). Few people have observed the species, but it is reportedly uncommon (J. Hart *in litt.* 2000). Both species are found in the canopy of lowland rainforest, though Golden-naped has also been recorded from forest edge and old second growth with tall trees remaining. When the security situation permits, surveys are needed for all three species to

determine their present status, the condition of the habitat, and any threats.

### Black-lored Waxbill *Estrilda nigriloris*

Data Deficient. This waxbill is restricted to an area judged less than 2,600 km<sup>2</sup> around the Lualaba River and Lake Upemba in southern Congo-Kinshasa. There have been no records since 1950. It occurs in grassy plains with tall grasses and bushes, in small flocks. Most of the population is probably within Upemba National Park, but it is unclear to what extent habitat there is protected. The taxon may simply be a subspecies of Common Waxbill *E. astrild* but it has a distinctive black eye-patch and a shorter, stubbier bill. Surveys are required to determine its distribution, population, habitat requirements and threats, and to provide data to determine its taxonomic status.

## East Africa

### Williams's Lark *Mirafra williamsi*

Data Deficient. Endemic to northern Kenya, where it occurs in two disjunct populations, one in the Dida Galgalu Desert (north of Marsabit) and the second between Isiolo and Garba Tula. The Marsabit population inhabits scattered short-grass areas with low shrubs, growing on rocky desert plains and red lava soils, whilst the Isiolo population occurs in uniform stands of low *Barleria* shrubs on rocky lava desert at 600–1,350 m. The species was not discovered until 1955 and its ecology, distribution, population size and threats are little known; surveys to determine these are needed. The species (Fig. 7) can be distinguished from Singing Bush Lark *M. cantillans* (which does not usually occur in the same habitat) by its characteristic rufous spotting on the breast, rufous-tinged upperparts, slightly longer tail, and paler bill with a dark culmen. The *intercedens* race of Fawn-coloured Lark *M. africanoides* is redder, heavily streaked below, has less white in the tail and a large reddish wing-patch. Williams's Lark is easiest to locate at dawn following the rains, when males engage in very long song-flights over their territories (B. Finch *in litt.* 2006).

### Friedmann's Lark *Mirafra pulpa*

Data Deficient. A very poorly known species. In Kenya, it is known from six specimens and a few sight records (although these include an observa-



tion of at least 150 individuals), principally from Tsavo East and West National Parks. The type-specimen was collected in Ethiopia in 1912, but it has only been seen there once since, in 1998. There are also several records from Mkomazi Game Reserve in Tanzania during 1994–96 and a single record south of Arusha in August 1998 (Lack 1997). It has been suggested that the species is migratory, as birds have been found amongst other migrants attracted to the lights of Ngulia Safiri Lodge in Tsavo West, and since it is largely found at certain times of year (e.g. during the rains in Tsavo). The paucity of records in other months may reflect habitat requirements (Lack 1997) or, alternatively, the difficulty of identifying non-singing individuals (B. Finch *in litt.* 2006). The species appears to prefer fairly dense grassland with bushes, possibly avoiding drier areas, and feeds on grass seeds, small grasshoppers and beetles. There are no known threats to the species but it is apparently rare, though certainly often overlooked. Friedmann's Lark (Fig. 6) is very similar to Singing Bush Lark and best identified by its characteristic song: a single long drawn-out *hoo-ee-oo* note, with a slight emphasis on the middle part, repeated at 1–2-second intervals. The song is given during undulating display-flights, or from the tops of small bushes, and also often at night (Lack 1997). The species is solitary and rather wary. Peter Lack's plea in 1997 for more information still stands a decade later: there is still much to learn about this lark's abundance, ecology, seasonal movements and possible threats.

#### **Tana River Cisticola** *Cisticola restrictus*

Data Deficient. Known from a small number of specimens, all collected in the lower Tana River basin (at Karawa, Garsen, Ijole, Mnazini and Sangole) in eastern Kenya (Collar & Stuart 1985), though it may also occur in Somalia, where there have been observations of birds perhaps of this species (Lewis 1982). It inhabits semi-arid, sandy *Acacia* bushland from lowlands to 500 m. Recent attempts to locate the species have been unsuccessful, and it has not been seen since 1972. The taxon's validity is often questioned (being regarded as aberrant Ashy Cisticolas *C. cinereolus* or a hybrid between Ashy and Rattling Cisticolas *C. chiniana*: Urban *et al.* 1997), but further examination of the type-material is desirable. Until its taxonomy is resolved, birders should search for the

species in the lower Tana River basin, listening for a song resembling that of Rattling Cisticola, given by a bird recalling a paler, browner, Ashy Cisticola, with a rusty-tinged crown, more narrowly streaked underparts, and longer, browner, buff-tipped tail with prominent black subterminal spots.

### **Southern Africa**

#### **White-chested Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus makawai*

Data Deficient. Known only from the type-specimen, collected in 1964 at Mayau in north-west Zambia (Benson & Irwin 1965), despite repeated attempts to relocate the taxon. It would seem to favour dense, evergreen *Cryptosepalum* thicket, dominated by *C. pseudotaxus*, and there are large areas of apparently suitable habitat in the relevant area of Zambia and adjacent Angola. The *Cryptosepalum* thickets are sparsely populated outside the West Lunga National Park and are difficult to clear for agriculture, so its habitat would appear not to be threatened, though fire is a potential risk which has affected nearby areas. The most extensive areas of suitable habitat occur within Lukwakwa Game Management Area. Although the taxon has been treated as an aberrant Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird *P. bilineatus* by many authorities, Collar & Fishpool (2006) recently argued the case again for specific status and emphasised the need for intensive surveys around the type-locality, and further north and west, covering any slight variations in the structure of *Cryptosepalum* forest caused by water or topographical features, and paying special attention to mistletoes.

#### **Long-tailed Pipit** *Anthus longicaudatus*

Data Deficient. This pipit is known from South Africa, but is presumed to be a migrant. There is also a possible sighting from Zambia (Sinclair & Ryan 2004), but this requires confirmation. The species occurs in flocks of 10–40, sometimes in mixed flocks with resident pipits—Buffy *A. vaalensis*, Grassland *A. cinnamomeus* and Long-billed Pipits *A. similis*—on playing fields in the town of Kimberley, and on surrounding farms (Liversidge 1996). There are reports that non-breeding flocks of a plain-backed pipit are common on open savannas in the northern and central Kalahari during the wet season: these could relate to the northern race of Plain-backed Pipit *A. leucophrys* or to Long-tailed Pipit (Harrison *et al.*



1997). Ornithologists in Kimberley and neighbouring regions, as well as further afield, should be on the alert for the occurrence of migratory or breeding individuals of this very poorly known species.

## Madagascar and Indian Ocean

### Alaotra Grebe *Tachybaptus rufolavatus*

Critically Endangered (Possibly Extinct). The sad story of Alaotra Grebe (Fig. 1) is perhaps one of biggest failures in African bird conservation in recent decades. The species was endemic to Madagascar where it was known chiefly from Lake Alaotra; given that the grebe was probably incapable of prolonged flight, the evidence suggests *rufolavatus* probably never occurred much further afield. The species was probably driven to extinction by a combination of mortality in monofilament nylon gill-nets and predation by the introduced carnivorous fish *Ophiocephalus* sp., compounded by other factors including hybridisation with Little Grebe *T. ruficollis*. There have been no direct observations since 12 were seen at Lake Alaotra in December 1982, and two were seen (in addition to several apparent hybrids) near Andreba, on Lake Alaotra, in September 1985 (Hawkins *et al.* 2000). Individuals with some characters of the species were also seen on Lake Alaotra in 1986 and 1988 (Hawkins *et al.* 2000), but a survey in 1999 found no individuals (of this or any species of *Tachybaptus*) on Lake Alaotra or surrounding lakes (ZICOMA 1999). One small glimmer of hope remains: unidentified grebes were seen in 2000 at nearby Lake Amparihinandriambavy, where there is no close human habitation. They were very difficult to approach sufficiently close to confirm their identity: at least some were Little Grebes, so the presence of Alaotra Grebe is perhaps unlikely, but not impossible (G. Young *in litt.* 2006). This wetland should be searched again as a high priority, in order to determine whether any possess the pale iris, longer bill, pale cinnamon throat and lower ear-coverts, and dusky underparts that distinguishes Alaotra Grebe from Little Grebe (which has a plain dark throat and chestnut ear-coverts), or Madagascar Grebe *T. pelzelinii* (which has a whitish line below the eye). Rediscovering this species would be a sensational success, and intensive searches at Lake Amparihinandriambavy are long overdue.

### Blüntschi's Vanga *Hypositta perdita*

Data Deficient. Another 'lost' species, as indicated by its scientific name (*perdita*), this taxon was discovered and named recently on the basis of two specimens (recently fledged juveniles) collected in primary forest and grassland in 1931, near Eminiminy, a village north of Taolañaro (Fort Dauphin) adjacent to (but outside) Andohahela National Park in south-east Madagascar (Peters 1996). Goodman *et al.* (1997) and Schulenberg (2003) suggested that the specimens may represent the unknown juvenile or immature plumage of Nuthatch Vanga *H. corallirostris*, a tree-climber of humid evergreen forest. However, further study is needed to establish whether the differences in relative proportions of the feet and legs between the type-specimens of Blüntschi's Vanga and adult Nuthatch Vanga could be accounted for by the former being juvenile Nuthatch Vanga. If they cannot, then Blüntschi's Vanga may well be a valid species, with the foot morphology apparently indicating that it is not specialised in climbing. As such, the two taxa would be ecologically separated and may co-exist. A faunal inventory of Andohahela in 1995, which included forest near Eminiminy, found only Nuthatch Vanga (Goodman *et al.* 1997). The principal threat to the forests of this region is from slash-and-burn cultivation by subsistence farmers. It is thus possible that Blüntschi's Vanga may have become extinct since 1931 (Peters 1996), although forest survives at Eminiminy (R. J. Safford *in litt.* 2006). Pending further clarification of its taxonomy, Blüntschi's Vanga should be searched for in suitable habitat (presumably forest) in the region of the type-locality.

### A trio of Comoros scops owls

The Indian Ocean islands of the Comoros hold three poorly known, Critically Endangered, scops owls: Anjouan *Otus capnodes*, Mohéli *O. moheliensis* and Grand Comoro *O. pauliani*. Anjouan Scops Owl (Fig. 2) was rediscovered on Anjouan (Ndzuani) in 1992, after 106 years without a scientific record (Safford 1993). The population size has been variously estimated at 100–200 pairs and 50 individuals, but is probably somewhere between the two (H. Doulton *in litt.* 2006). It survives in remnants of native upland forest, usually on steep slopes, though it has recently also been found as low as 300 m in highly degraded forest

(H. Doulton *in litt.* 2006). Nevertheless, the species is likely to be under pressure from agriculture, timber extraction, charcoal manufacture and invasive alien plants. **Mohéli Scops Owl** is endemic to Mohéli, where the population is estimated at 400 individuals. The species (Fig. 3) is found in dense, humid forest, which remains only on the central peak and its upper slopes. This owl is common in intact forest, but such habitat is under pressure from subsistence agriculture. The third species, **Grand Comoro Scops Owl**, is found only on Mt Karthala, an active volcano on Grand Comoro (Ngazidja), where it occurs from 650 m to the treeline, on the north, west and south flanks of the volcano, where c.100 km<sup>2</sup> of suitable primary, montane, evergreen forest is extant. Population size is probably in excess of 1,000 pairs (H. Doulton *in litt.* 2006), but intact forest is declining as agriculture advances upslope. Up-to-date information on the status, population trends, ecology and threats for all three species is urgently needed to help support their conservation.

## Afterword

Hopefully this article will draw people's attention to a suite of threatened and Data Deficient species for which new information (in some cases, an initial confirmation of their continued existence) is urgently needed to further their conservation. Many additional species remain poorly known and might have been included here, e.g. **Nubian Bustard** *Neotis nuba* (Near Threatened; rare and little known, with the main populations probably in Niger and Chad, but under severe hunting pressure and possibly more threatened than currently assessed); **Shelley's Eagle Owl** *Bubo shelleyi* (Near Threatened; rare, known from scattered localities between Sierra Leone and northern Congo-Kinshasa); **Ash's Lark** *Mirafra ashi* (Endangered; known from only one small area in south-east Somalia); **Degodi Lark** *Mirafra degodiensis* (Vulnerable; known from few recent records in a very restricted range in southern Ethiopia, but note that its taxonomic status is currently under review by BirdLife); **Prigogine's Bulbul** *Chlorocichla prigoginei* (Endangered; restricted to two sites in eastern Congo-Kinshasa); **Dusky Greenbul** *Bernieria tenebrosus* (Vulnerable; apparently often misidentified, with few reliable records, from central-eastern rainforests in Madagascar); **Rockefeller's Sunbird** *Nectarinia*

*rockefelleri* (Vulnerable; restricted to the Itombwe Mountains and near Lake Kivu in eastern Congo-Kinshasa, with few recent data on its status); **Anambra Waxbill** *Estrilda poliopareia* (Vulnerable; known only from the Niger delta in southern Nigeria, with few recent records apart from those at Tombia [Anon. 2002] and those documented in Roux & Otobotekere 2005); **São Tomé Grosbeak** *Neospiza concolor* (Critically Endangered; rediscovered in 1991, with a few recent sightings mainly from the Xufexufe and São Miguel areas); **Warsangli Linnet** *Carduelis johannis* (Endangered; restricted to two small areas in the northern Somali highlands); plus four Data Deficient species that are currently under review for reclassification as Least Concern: **Brazza's Martin** *Phedina brazzae*, **African River Martin** *Pseudochelidon eurystomina*, **Baumann's Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus baumanni* and **Dorst's Cisticola** *Cisticola guinea* (see discussions at [www.birdlifeforums.org](http://www.birdlifeforums.org)); as well as the recently rediscovered but still poorly known species mentioned in the introduction. Countries that are particularly information-poor include Angola (notwithstanding several recent surveys), Somalia, Ethiopia (which also has several possible new species awaiting description), northern Mozambique and southern Congo-Kinshasa.

There are now several sources of funding that will support searches and surveys for species such as these, including: (1) the African Bird Club's Conservation Fund (see [www.africanbirdclub.org](http://www.africanbirdclub.org)); (2) the Birdfair/Royal Society for the Protection of Birds research fund for endangered birds (contact [paul.donald@rspb.org.uk](mailto:paul.donald@rspb.org.uk)); (3) the British Ornithologists' Union's ornithological research grants (see [www.bou.org.uk](http://www.bou.org.uk)); (4) the Club 300 Foundation for Bird Protection (e-mail [birdprotection@club300.se](mailto:birdprotection@club300.se)); and (5) the BP Conservation Programme (see <http://conservation.bp.com>).

For African countries that have national NGO Partners of BirdLife International, birders from elsewhere planning to search for or survey the birds described above are strongly encouraged to liaise with these organisations (see [www.birdlife.org/worldwide/national/index.html](http://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/national/index.html)) in order to seek advice on local logistics and security, and to maximise the utility of any field work to such organisations' conservation programmes.

BirdLife International is responsible for collating information and assessing the status of all of

the world's birds for the IUCN Red List. We would therefore be pleased to hear of the results of any searches, positive or negative. Most birders in Africa seem to visit the same well-established sites, but there is a tremendous opportunity for them to apply their skills and resources in a way that will deliver significant conservation benefits. BirdLife encourages you to venture off the beaten path, track down these species, and help their conservation!

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**Figure 1.** Alaotra Grebe / Grèbe roussâtre *Podiceps rufolavatus*, Zahamena, Madagascar, 1985 (Paul Thompson)

**Figure 2.** Anjouan Scops Owl *Otus capnodes*: a mixed pair of rufous and dark morph individuals, near Lingoni, Anjouan, July 2005 (Charles Marsh)

Petit-duc d'Anjouan *Otus capnodes*: un couple mixte d'individus de forme rousse et sombre, près de Lingoni, Anjouan, July 2005 (Charles Marsh)

**Figure 3.** Nechisar Nightjar *Caprimulgus solala*: the wing from which this species is known, found on Nechisar Plains, Ethiopia, 3 September 1990 (photographed on 4 September 1990: Roger Safford)

Engoulevent de Nechisar *Caprimulgus solala*: l'aile par laquelle l'espèce est connue, trouvée dans la Plaine de Nechisar, Ethiopie, 3 septembre 1990 (photographié le 4 septembre 1990: Roger Safford)

**Figure 4.** Mohéli Scops Owl / Petit-duc de Mohéli *Otus moheliensis*, Chalet St Antoine, Mohéli, October 2000 (Claire Spottiswoode).

**Figure 5.** Congo Bay Owl *Phodilus prigoginei*: female mist-netted, Itombwe Forest, 1 May 1996 (Tom Butynski)  
Phodile de Prigogine *Phodilus prigoginei*: femelle prise au filet, Forêt de l'Itombwe, 1 mai 1996 (Tom Butynski)

**Figure 6.** Friedmann's Lark / Alouette de Friedmann *Mirafra pulpa*, Taita Discovery Centre, Rukinga Ranch, Tsavo, Kenya, 12 October 2005 (Brian Finch)

**Figure 7.** Bulu Burti Boubou / Gonolek de Bulu Burti *Laniarius liberatus*, Bulu Burti, Somalia, 1989 (E. F. G. Smith)

**Figure 8.** Williams's Lark / Alouette de Williams *Mirafra williamsi*, Shaba Game Reserve, 14 February 2003 (Brian Finch)

**Figure 9.** Monteiro's Bush-shrike / Gladiateur de Monteiro *Malaconotus monteiri*, Kumbira Forest, near Conda, Angola, October 2003 (Callan Cohen)



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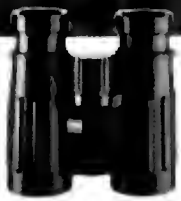
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## Studies of Socotran birds II.

# One, two or three species: towards a rational taxonomy for the Golden-winged Grosbeak *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*

Guy M. Kirwan<sup>a</sup> and Andrew Grieve<sup>b</sup>

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Études des oiseaux de Socotra II. Une, deux ou trois espèces: vers une taxonomie rationnelle pour le Grand-verdier à ailes d'or *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*. *Rhynchostruthus*, généralement traité comme monotypique, est un de ces genres de fringillidés de l'Ancien Monde taxonomiquement énigmatiques dont la parenté a intrigué les systématiciens depuis longtemps. En utilisant des données de la morphologie et des mensurations, nous avons examiné les limites spécifiques du Grand-verdier à ailes d'or *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*, qui a été traditionnellement traité comme une espèce polytypique, comprenant trois taxons: la sous-espèce nominale *socotranus* sur l'île de Socotra, *louisae* dans le nord de la Somalie, et *percivali* en Arabie du sud. Récemment, Fry & Keith (2004) ont toutefois suggéré que deux espèces devaient être reconnues à l'intérieur de ce genre: *louisae* sur le continent africain et *socotranus* (y compris *percivali*) en Arabie et à Socotra. Notre analyse indique que jusqu'à six caractéristiques de plumage peuvent être utilisées pour séparer les mâles des trois taxons (dont trois sont diagnostiques et les autres quasiment diagnostiques), et cinq caractéristiques pour distinguer les femelles (toutes les cinq diagnostiques). Des données morphométriques soumises à l'Analyse en Composantes Principales indiquent que les trois taxons, et surtout les mâles, sont plutôt mieux séparés au niveau de la taille et des proportions qu'on ne le pensait jusqu'à présent. À certains égards les oiseaux de Socotra ressemblent davantage aux populations d'Arabie (principalement par la présence d'une tache blanche sur la joue), qu'à *louisae* du continent africain, mais ils sont néanmoins faciles à distinguer de ces deux derniers. Ceci n'est pas surprenant quand on pense que la plupart des taxons aviaires endémiques de Socotra sont soit réellement uniques (c'est-à-dire des espèces) soit probablement à traiter comme des synonymes de formes africaines (Kirwan in press a,b). Bien que nos résultats exigent un examen moléculaire, ils suggèrent assez bien qu'il s'agit de trois allo-espèces, peut-être même trois espèces à part entière, si on se base sur la définition du rang d'espèce de Helbig *et al.* (2002); les arguments en faveur de la reconnaissance de plus d'une espèce sont légèrement plus faibles si la méthode quantitative de Collar (2006, à détailler par Collar *et al.* in prep.) est utilisée. Nous recommandons que *R. socotranus* soit dorénavant traité comme trois espèces ou une seule, mais suggérons que la reconnaissance de deux espèces à l'intérieur du genre est une sur-estimation ou sous-estimation de la biodiversité.

**Summary.** *Rhynchostruthus*, generally treated as monospecific, is one of a number of taxonomically enigmatic Old-World finch genera whose close relatives have long intrigued systematists. Using morphology and morphometrics, we investigated species limits in the Golden-winged Grosbeak *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*, which has traditionally been viewed as a polytypic species comprising three taxa: nominate *socotranus* on the island of Socotra; *louisae* in northern Somalia; and *percivali* in southern Arabia. Recently, however, Fry & Keith (2004) suggested that two species should be recognised within this genus: *louisae* in mainland Africa and *socotranus* (including *percivali*) in Arabia and Socotra. Our analysis suggests that as many as six plumage features can be used to separate males of the three taxa (three being diagnostic and the others virtually so), and five features to distinguish females (all of them diagnostic). Morphometric data subjected to a Principal Components Analysis suggest that the three taxa are rather better separated in size and shape than was previously thought, especially amongst males. In some respects Socotran birds more closely resemble Arabian populations (principally in the presence of a white cheek patch), rather than *louisae* of mainland Africa, but are nonetheless readily distinguished from both. This is unsurprising when one considers that most of Socotra's endemic avian taxa are either truly

unique (i.e. species) or are probably best considered as synonyms of African forms (Kirwan in press a,b). Our results demand molecular testing, but provide strong indication that three allospecies, perhaps even full species, are involved, based on the guidelines for assigning species rank of Helbig *et al.* (2002), but marginally weaker evidence for the recognition of more than one species if the quantitative system used by Collar (2006, to be elaborated in full by Collar *et al.* in prep.) is employed. We recommend that *R. socotranus* be henceforth regarded as either three species or one, but suggest that to recognise two species within the genus is either over-estimating or under-estimating biodiversity.

This is the second in a series of papers that re-analyses the taxonomy of birds described from the ancient island of Socotra, which lies close to the Horn of Africa but is politically part of Yemen (the first part considered subspecific limits in *Caprimulgus nubicus*: Kirwan 2004). These notes seek to reawaken interest in taxonomic studies of Socotran birds, specifically to meet the challenge set by Martins (1996), who stated: 'There is a clear need for a review of the avifauna of Socotra which reflects contemporary systematic thinking.' The present contribution considers the taxonomy of the Golden-winged Grosbeak *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*, a bird restricted to northern Somalia, Socotra and southernmost Arabia.

*Rhynchostruthus* is a monospecific cardueline taxon of somewhat enigmatic affinities (see also Martins 1987). Though its skull structure resembles those of the Asian genera *Rhodopechys* and *Mycerobas* (the possibility of it being a relictual taxon from the Himalayas was noted by Ripley 1954) and the New World *Hesperiphona* (grosbeaks), Fry & Keith (2004) considered *Rhynchostruthus* as being close to *Carduelis* because of their morphological similarities, and even suggested that *Rhynchostruthus* might be better subsumed within *Carduelis*. Dickinson (2003) also considered them close relatives, but maintained two genera. For now, we too consider that the available evidence supports the *status quo*, namely that *Rhynchostruthus* is a sufficiently distinct taxon to merit recognition, albeit closely related to *Carduelis*. Martins (1987) noted the similarities in flight-display between *Rhynchostruthus* and some Eurasian *Carduelis*, whilst Lees-Smith (1986) drew attention to the cardueline body size and colour pattern, but pointed to their dissimilarity to Afrotropical carduelines. Earlier, Voous (1977) had placed it, with *Callacanthus*, between *Serinus* and *Carduelis*, whilst noting, as had Ripley & Bond (1966), the difficulties of determining its relationships (in an epoch prior to the wide-rang-

ing use of molecular techniques to resolve such issues). Work in progress, by Groth (1998), towards a robust phylogeny for the cardueline finches (and Hawaiian honeycreepers) suggests that *R. socotranus* occupies the same clade as many *Serinus* canaries, as well as a number of *Carduelis*, *Loxia* (crossbills) and one of the four species sometimes placed in the genus *Rhodopechys* (*obsoleta*; Desert Finch). Indeed, *Rhynchostruthus* appears to cluster most closely with the latter and *Carduelis sinica* (Oriental Greenfinch).

Three taxa are usually recognised within *Rhynchostruthus*, traditionally at subspecific level: *R. s. socotranus* Sclater & Hartlaub, 1881 (syn. *riebecki* Hartlaub, 1881; endemic to Socotra), *R. s. louisae* Phillips, 1897 (endemic to a small area of northern Somalia; see Ash & Miskell 1998), and *R. s. percivali* Ogilvie-Grant, 1900 (syn. *yemenensis* Ogilvie-Grant, 1913; endemic to south-west Arabia). As was the norm in the late 19th century, all three taxa were originally described as species, but were thereafter widely treated subspecifically, until Fry & Keith (2004), elected to elevate *louisae* (Somali Golden-winged Grosbeak) and *socotranus* including *percivali* (Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak) to the level of species once again. Furthermore, just prior to this proposal, Sinclair & Ryan (2003), in their African field guide, chose to treat both *louisae* and nominate *socotranus* specifically, the implication being that *percivali* also merits such status, though this taxon is outside the scope of their book and therefore unmentioned therein.

## Methods

We acquired mensural data from specimens of all relevant taxa (see Table 3) held at the Natural History Museum (NHM, Tring), as follows: *Rhynchostruthus socotranus socotranus* (Socotra: *n*=15, including eight males); *Rhynchostruthus socotranus louisae* (Somalia: *n*=16, including ten males); and *Rhynchostruthus socotranus percivali* (Saudi

**Table 1.** Characters useful in discriminating males of Golden-winged Grosbeak *Rhynchostruthus socotranus* taxa. The following were rated as diagnostic on the basis of this evaluation: white cheek-patch, crown colour and underparts pattern. The other characters were rated as near-diagnostic. Numbers in parentheses refer to scoring system following Collar (2006) and Collar *et al.* (in prep.). The right-hand column presents the conservative total under the latter system of all morphological characters.

**Tableau 1.** Caractères utiles pour distinguer les mâles des taxons du Grand-verdier à ailes d'or *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*. Les caractères suivants ont été considérés comme diagnostiques sur la base de cette évaluation: tache blanche sur la joue, couleur de la calotte et aspect des parties inférieures. Les autres caractères ont été considérés comme quasi diagnostiques. Les chiffres entre parenthèses sont les points accordés à chaque caractère selon la méthode de Collar (2006) et Collar *et al.* (in prep.). La colonne de droite présente le total minimal accordé à l'ensemble des caractères morphologiques en suivant cette méthode.

Taxon	Character						Scoring
	white cheek-patch	crown colour	throat colour	underparts	outermost tail-feather	wing	
<i>socotranus</i>	black border	dusky black	chocolate-black and most extensive	pale grey throughout	distinct yellow fringe	as <i>percivali</i>	
<i>louisae</i>	no white on cheeks (3)	dark greyish (more concolorous with mantle) (1)	chocolate-black, only on throat (1)	plain grey grading to white ventrally (1)	distinct yellow fringe to outer web	solid wing-band, yellow extends nearer to base of secondaries (1)	7
<i>percivali</i>	very narrow brown border (1)	brown (sometimes warmer, even chestnut) (1)	black (largely restricted to chin) (1)	chestnut on throat/ upper breast grading to grey (some have slight white cast to vent) (3)	virtually no yellow fringe (1)	wing-band appears broken because base of outer secondaries dark	7

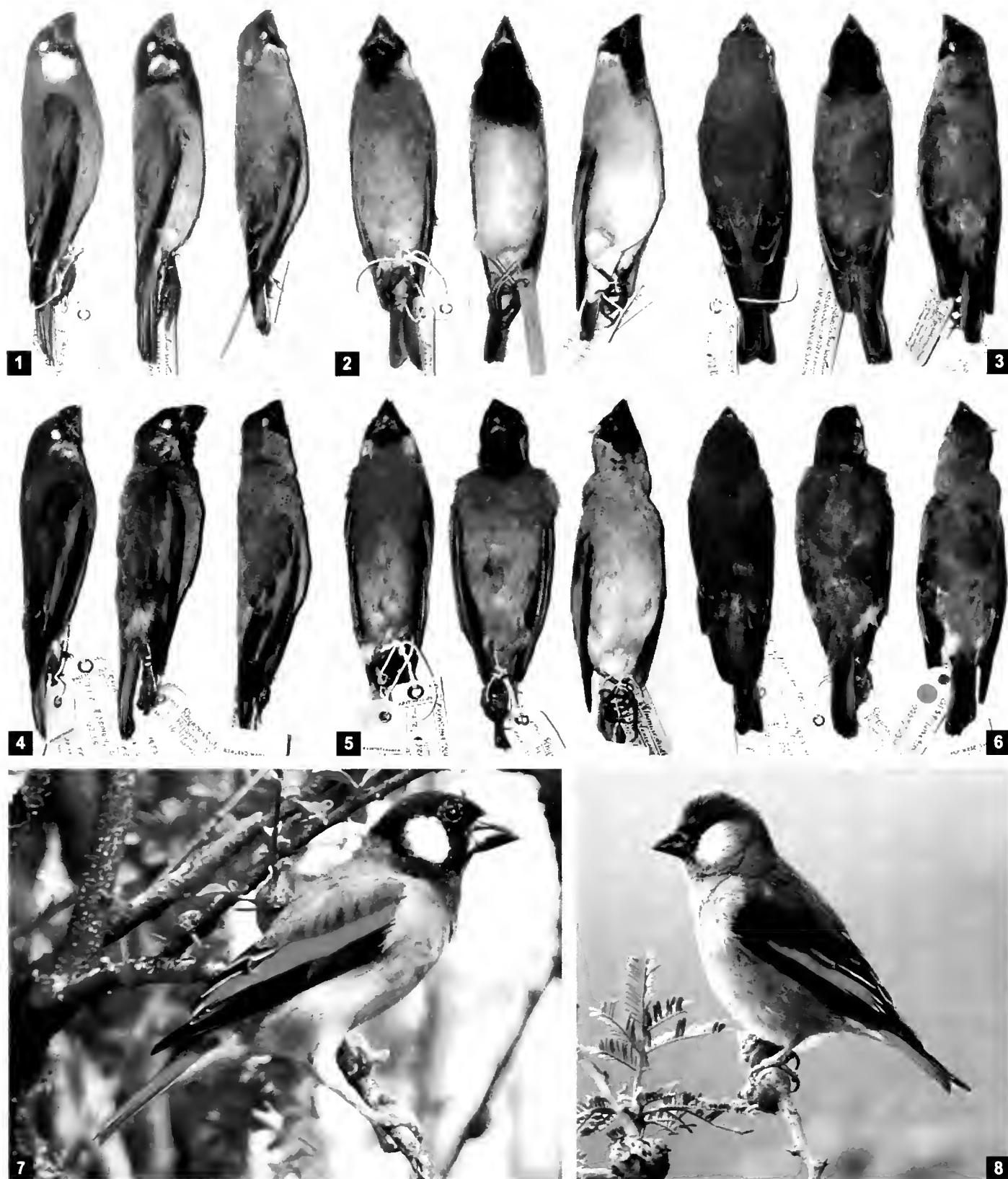
Arabia and Yemen: *n*=26, including 16 males), and the National Museum of Natural History (Smithsonian Institution), Washington DC: *R. s. socotranus* (Socotra: *n*=32, including 21 males); and *R. s. louisae* (Somalia: *n*=3, including one male). The following types were examined: *R. s. socotranus* (NHM 1881.3.21.28), *R. s. louisae* (NHM 1898.4.24.24), *R. s. percivali* (NHM 1900.12.6.1) and '*R. s. yemenensis*' (NHM 1913.8.6.127). Specimens were generally sexed according to label data, but these were checked closely against relevant literature (Clement *et al.* 1993, Fry & Keith 2004) in the case of suspect identifications. The following data were obtained from each specimen: wing-chord (flattened) and tail-length, using a standard metal wing-rule with a perpendicular stop at zero (accurate to 0.5 mm), and culmen-length (to skull) and culmen-depth (at the feathers), using digital callipers (accurate to 0.01 mm). All measurements were taken by GMK.

Notes on plumage variation in both sexes of all three forms of Golden-winged Grosbeak were taken and ranked according to their usefulness in distinguishing the different taxa. There was a clear hierarchy in their relative usefulness. Thus, they were non-statistically rated as being either average

or good, with the latter category being further subdivided into good- and good+ (these subdivisions can be considered as being 'virtually diagnostic' and 'diagnostic'). We also attempted to conservatively score character differences within the context of a comparison of all three taxa using the system elucidated by Collar (2006), which will be fully tabled by Collar *et al.* (in prep.). A broad range of material, pertaining to all three generally recognised forms, was photographed, using a Nikon Coolpix 885 digital camera, in indirect natural light (see Figs. 1–6).

Statistical analyses were performed using the MINITAB programme and PAST (PALaeontological STATistics) was used to generate the Principal Components Analysis (PCA) and compile the figures. All Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was one-way to evaluate significant mean differences between the different taxa. Specimens for which an incomplete series of mensural data was available were excluded from the statistical analysis.

Field observations of Golden-winged Grosbeaks were made by GMK in Yemen and Socotra in March–April 1993 and by both authors in south-west Oman in March 2005.



## Results

**Plumage.**—A number of plumage characters serve to differentiate the three taxa, namely the presence and pattern of the white cheek-patch, crown colour, throat colour, underpart pattern, the pattern on the outermost tail-feather and, principally in males, the pattern of yellow in the wing. All other characters were found to be useful in discriminating adults of both sexes, but whereas all of

the first-named five were perfectly diagnostic in females, only three were ranked as diagnostic in males, i.e. the white cheek-patch, crown colour and underpart pattern. Specific details of the plumage of each taxon in relation to these characters are presented in Tables 1–2.

Juvenile males, of which we have examined very few of any form, are distinguished from adults by the heavily dark-streaked upperparts



including crown and mantle in *socotranus*, but *louisae* appears unstreaked in this plumage, whereas *percivali* clearly resembles *socotranus* at this age, but the only bird examined by us had less clear streaking on the mantle. The underparts of juvenile males are very pale, with an almost unstreaked lower belly / ventral region in *socotranus* (a feature also apparent in three juvenile females of this form), but *percivali* is more heavily streaked throughout the underparts (like *louisae*). Some younger birds, of both sexes, in *socotranus* which have achieved mainly adult plumage (in May) retain some streaking on the breast and, in one case, even on the mantle (late April). For further remarks on the younger plumages of *socotranus* see Gedeon & Neumann (2004).

#### Captions to plates on opposite page

**Figures 1–3.** Lateral, ventral and dorsal views of male Golden-winged Grosbeaks *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*, left to right: *R. s. percivali*, from Ta'izz, Yemen, December 1948; *R. s. socotranus*, from Adho Dimellus, Socotra, February 1899; and *R. s. louisae*, from Wadi Mirso (=Marso), Somalia, November 1917 (Guy M. Kirwan, © The Natural History Museum, Tring)

Vues latérales, ventrales et dorsales de spécimens mâles du Grand-verdier à ailes d'or *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*, de gauche à droite: *R. s. percivali*, de Ta'izz, Yémen, décembre 1948; *R. s. socotranus*, de Adho Dimellus, Socotra, février 1899; et *R. s. louisae*, de Wadi Mirso (=Marso), Somalie, novembre 1917 (Guy M. Kirwan, © The Natural History Museum, Tring)

**Figures 4–6.** Lateral, ventral and dorsal views of female Golden-winged Grosbeaks *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*, left to right: *R. s. percivali*, from Ta'izz, Yemen, December 1948; *R. s. socotranus*, from Hijama, Socotra, March 1953; and *R. s. louisae*, from Wadi Mirso (=Marso), Somalia, November 1917 (Guy M. Kirwan, © The Natural History Museum, Tring)

Vues latérales, ventrales et dorsales de spécimens femelles du Grand-verdier à ailes d'or *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*, de gauche à droite: *R. s. percivali*, de Ta'izz, Yémen, décembre 1948; *R. s. socotranus*, de Hijama, Socotra, mars 1953; et *R. s. louisae*, de Wadi Mirso (=Marso), Somalie, novembre 1917 (Guy M. Kirwan, © The Natural History Museum, Tring)

**Figure 7.** Golden-winged Grosbeak / Grand-verdier à ailes d'or *Rhynchostruthus socotranus socotranus*, Diksam Plateau, Socotra, 3 April 2007 (Barrie Rose)

**Figure 8.** Golden-winged Grosbeak / Grand-verdier à ailes d'or *Rhynchostruthus socotranus percivali*, near Kawkaban, Yemen, 23 March 2007 (P. Ryan)

**Mensural characters.**—The analyses revealed the distinctiveness of *louisae*, which is significantly shorter winged, shorter tailed and smaller billed than either *percivali* or *socotranus*. Furthermore, *socotranus* is significantly shorter winged and has a less deep-based bill than *percivali* (Tables 3–5; Figs. 9–10). The PCA graphs (Figs. 9–10) reveal the degree of separation amongst the three taxa, which is particularly marked in males, but less so in females.

**Moult.**—Virtually nothing has previously been published on moult in the genus *Rhynchostruthus* (see, e.g., Gedeon & Neumann 2004). There was no evidence of wing moult in autumn in five specimens of *louisae* that were in their second calendar year at least (two males, two females, one unsexed), taken between 5 and 21 September. All were in fresh plumage, suggesting that moult in these birds may have taken place prior to this period. A further eight specimens of the same age, obtained between October and December, were also all in reasonably fresh plumage with little sign of wear. A single similar-age female, taken on 31 January, was worn but not heavily so, whilst single male and female specimens taken in early to mid May showed no evidence of body moult.

Of 21 specimens of *percivali* obtained in December–January, individuals of both sexes in at least their second calendar year also showed no sign of ongoing moult and were in reasonably fresh plumage with relatively little sign of wear. Two specimens of *percivali* obtained between 25 February and 3 March in at least their second calendar year (at the same time that specimens of *socotranus* were in arrested moult; see below) showed no moult activity and were in fresh plumage with no sign of significant feather wear.

Seven (four males and three females) of nine *socotranus* in at least their second calendar year, obtained between 12 February and 23 March, showed arrested wing moult. In six of these all of the tertials had been replaced, in all seven between two and six secondaries had been renewed, and in one bird four primaries had been replaced; the remaining unmoulted wing-feathers in all these birds were heavily worn. The two birds not showing arrested moult had fresh remiges and rectrices, and there was evidence of recently completed moult in the undertail-coverts of one bird.

**Table 2.** Characters useful in discriminating females of Golden-winged Grosbeak *Rhynchostruthus socotranus* taxa. All characters were considered diagnostic. Note that the wing pattern in all three taxa was identical to that of the respective males, but the differences are even less marked. Numbers in parentheses refer to scoring system following Collar (2006) and Collar *et al.* (in prep.). The right-hand column presents the conservative total under the latter system of all morphological characters.

**Tableau 2.** Caractères utiles pour distinguer les femelles des taxons du Grand-verdier à ailes d'or *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*. Tous les caractères ont été considérés comme diagnostiques. Notez que le pattern de l'aile des trois taxons était identique à ceux des mâles respectifs, mais les différences sont encore moins marquées. Les chiffres entre parenthèses sont les points accordés à chaque caractère selon la méthode de Collar (2006) et Collar *et al.* (in prep.). La colonne de droite présente le total minimal accordé à l'ensemble des caractères morphologiques en suivant cette méthode.

Taxon	Character					Scoring
	white cheek-patch	crown colour	throat colour	underparts	outermost tail-feather	
<i>socotranus</i>	narrow dark border, flammulated grey at rear	dull blackish becoming brown-grey at rear	dull blackish and most extensive	brown upper breast, inclining to pale grey and whiter on undertail-coverts	distinct yellow fringe	
<i>louisae</i>	no white on cheeks (2)	grey-brown (almost concolorous with mantle) (1)	dull blackish, restricted to chin (1)	entirely grey becoming paler on belly and white on undertail-coverts (1)	distinct yellow fringe	5
<i>percivali</i>	brown-grey border, flammulated grey (1)	brown inclining to chestnut on forehead (1)	largely brown with tiny black chin (2)	solid (darker) grey with white undertail-coverts (1)	no distinct yellow fringe (none on shaft) (1)	6

## Discussion

### Taxonomic treatment

Allopatric taxa, as noted by Helbig *et al.* (2002), always present particularly problematic cases when endeavouring to ascertain whether they should be regarded specifically, for as these authors state: ‘Assignment of species rank in such cases will necessarily be based on hypothesis, rather than on proven facts.’ All three constituents of *Rhynchostruthus* are clearly rather close in general morphology, ecology and habits. Nonetheless, they are also easily diagnosable in virtually all plumages. In addition, both sexes clearly separate using a multivariate statistical analysis of mensural data (see Table 3, and Figs. 9–10). In sum, it seems that the three *Rhynchostruthus* demand recognition under any of the pattern-defined species concepts currently operating (see Sluys & Hazevoet 1999) and have certainly achieved allospecies status, but whether they have achieved full species rank under the modern definition of the Biological Species Concept (BSC) should perhaps await the results of molecular analysis, notwithstanding the decision of Fry & Keith (2004) to treat the complex as two species. In contrast, all of the taxa discussed here would surely be recognised as species under the framework of the Metapopulation Lineage Concept (or General

Species Concept), application of which, it was argued recently by de Queiroz (2005), not only provides a means of unifying how modern-day biologists diagnose ‘species’, but also returns more closely to Mayr’s original conceptualisation of what constitutes a species, rather than merely focusing on the attribute of reproductive isolation.

Because of a perception that the Helbig *et al.* (2002) guidelines set a threshold too low for assigning species status, especially for allopatric taxa (Collar 2004), Collar *et al.* (in prep.) will present an alternative system for use by those seeking also to work within the confines of an updated BSC. Working from this, Collar (2006) presented a revision of species limits in some Asian babblers using quantitative scoring to assign species status on the basis of plumage, morphometric and vocal characters. In cases of polytypy, Collar (2006) compared the morphologically closest taxa, whereas in submitting *Rhynchostruthus* to such a ‘test’ we have deliberately endeavoured, as far as possible, to score *percivali* and *louisae* in comparison to *socotranus* for both sexes separately (see Tables 1 and 2) and with a degree of conservatism. Thus, for a taxon to score at all, it was required to differ in any given feature from *both* other taxa being analysed, rather than merely from the closest in morphology (given that all three are

**Table 3.** Mensural data for the three taxa of Golden-winged Grosbeak *Rhynchostruthus socotranus* with significance levels (one-way analysis of variance ANOVA).

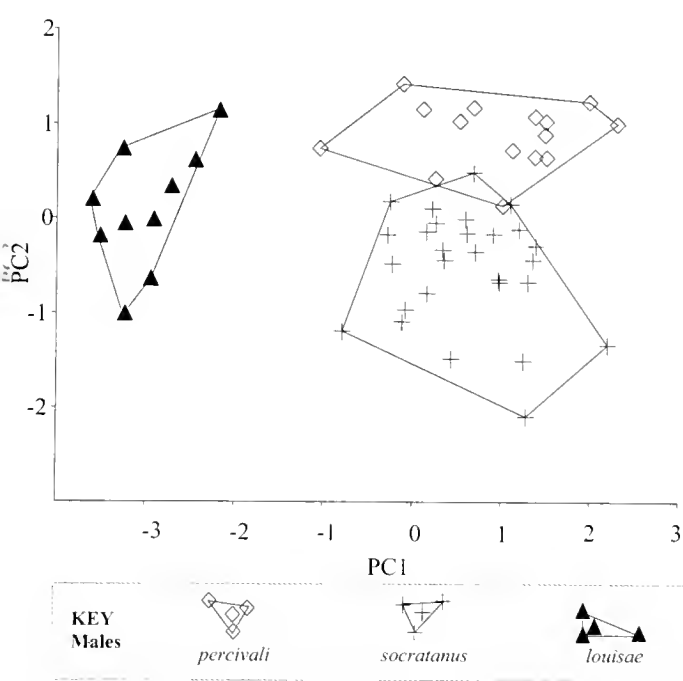
**Tableau 3.** Mensurations des trois taxons du Grand-verdier à ailes d'or *Rhynchostruthus socotranus* avec niveaux de signification (analyse ANOVA de variance à un facteur).

	<i>percivali</i> mean ± SD (n)	<i>socotranus</i> mean ± SD (n)	<i>louisae</i> mean ± SD (n)	ANOVA
Wing	male	90.78 ± 2.21 (18)	86.82 ± 1.34 (30)	82.30 ± 2.06 (10) ***
	female	85.60 ± 1.71 (10)	83.29 ± 2.05 (17)	79.25 ± 2.38 (8) ***
Tail	male	56.06 ± 2.79 (17)	56.07 ± 2.50 (30)	50.30 ± 1.64 (10) ***
	female	53.70 ± 2.06 (10)	53.00 ± 2.37 (17)	50.00 ± 2.62 (8) **
Bill-length	male	18.55 ± 0.68 (18)	18.56 ± 0.64 (29)	15.84 ± 0.55 (10) ***
	female	17.26 ± 1.14 (10)	17.56 ± 0.67 (17)	14.99 ± 1.09 (8) ***
Bill-depth	male	11.99 ± 0.43 (17)	12.68 ± 0.61 (29)	10.89 ± 0.43 (10) ***
	female	10.92 ± 0.55 (10)	11.74 ± 0.44 (16)	10.09 ± 0.38 (8) ***

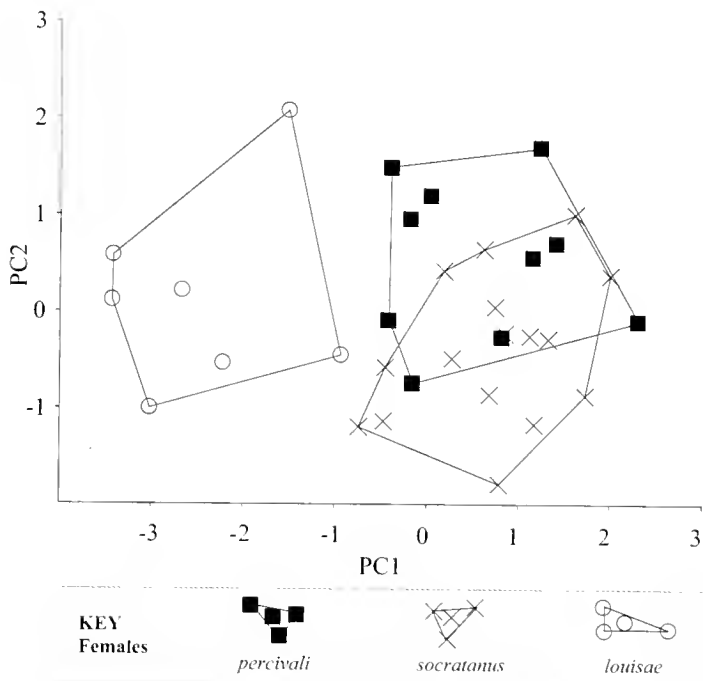
\*\* =  $P < 0.01$  \*\*\* =  $P < 0.001$

close both in geographical and morphological terms). In the present case, it is only possible to score morphological and morphometric characters, as vocal data that can be subject to meaningful analysis are lacking. Taking the highest available score for each taxon (i.e. from either sex) gives totals of *louisae* = 7 and *percivali* = 7, to which scores we would also allot a further point for their reasonably well-differentiated morphometrics. In

other words, all three taxa would achieve species status under the Collar *et al.* system (which determines 7 as the lowest score required to allot such a ranking). It should be emphasised that all taxa achieved a score of 2 or 3 for at least one feature. (The Collar *et al.* guidelines do not admit species-level recognition for any taxon that does not possess at least one character scoring in excess of 1, regardless of whether a total 7 is achieved.)



**Figure 9.** Plot of first (PC1) and second (PC2) principle components for a Principle Components Analysis of four morphometric measurements of males of three taxa of Golden-winged Grosbeak *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*.  
Position des premières (PC1) et secondes (PC2) composantes principales pour une Analyse en Composantes Principales de quatre mensurations morphométriques de mâles des trois taxons du Grand-verdier à ailes d'or *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*.



**Figure 10.** Plot of first (PC1) and second (PC2) principle components for a Principle Components Analysis of four morphometric measurements of females of three taxa of Golden-winged Grosbeak *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*.  
Position des premières (PC1) et secondes (PC2) composantes principales pour une Analyse en Composantes Principales de quatre mensurations morphométriques de femelles des trois taxons du Grand-verdier à ailes d'or *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*.

**Table 4.** Principle component (PC) loadings on mensural characters of male Golden-winged Grosbeaks *Rhynchostruthus socotranus* for the three taxa.

**Tableau 4.** Importance des composantes principales (PC) de mensurations de mâles du Grand-verdier à ailes d'or *Rhynchostruthus socotranus* pour les trois taxons.

Character	PC1	PC2	PC3	PC4
Wing	0.483	0.679	-0.185	-0.521
Tail	0.523	0.069	0.798	0.291
Bill-length	0.533	-0.057	-0.571	0.622
Bill-depth	0.457	-0.729	-0.052	-0.507
Eigen values	2.682	0.673	0.379	0.189
% variance	68.36	17.15	9.67	4.82

Two of the authors of the new guidelines, N. J. Collar and L. D. C. Fishpool, independently examined and scored the material in Tring and arrived at the following conclusions. They scored *louisae* 1 for smaller bill, 2 for different face pattern (crown to chin), 2 for different underparts (throat and upper breast), 1 for full yellow wing-band, 1 for more yellow in tail and 1 for greater sexual uniformity, = 7. When rating *socotranus* against *percivali*, they ranked these taxa as scoring 3 for different face pattern, 3 for different upper undersides and 1 for different belly coloration, = 7.

Given the paucity of vocal data for the three taxa, indeed the complete lack of such information for *louisae*, it is currently impossible to investigate whether any such differences exist amongst the different forms of *Rhynchostruthus*. Accepting this, and the lack of molecular analyses, we recommend that *socotranus*, *louisae* and *percivali* be regarded as either one species (following traditional taxonomy) or three (as, presumably, in Sinclair & Ryan 2003), but consider that separation into two species (following Fry & Keith 2004) does not provide a rational taxonomic solution to the variation exhibited by these taxa. Whilst *louisae* is plainly the most obviously different of the three (due to its lacking a white cheek-patch), *socotranus* and *percivali* are both easily diagnosable too. It is also probably the case that their evolutionary histories have long been separate.

Socotra was originally part of the African–Arabian tectonic plate (it forms a continuation of the Somali peninsula) and probably became isolated by the same series of dislocations during the break-up of Gondwana that produced the Gulf of Aden in the late Tertiary, at least 10 million years ago (Laughton *et al.* 1970). It is thought that the Haggier mountains have

remained above sea level since the Mesozoic (Gregory 1903, Uvarov & Popov 1958, Wranik 2003), thereby acting as a refugium for terrestrial fauna and flora. Nonetheless, for an unknown period following the continental separation, Socotra apparently formed part of a landbridge between Africa and Arabia, thus also permitting some faunal interchange. Ornithologically, overall, Socotra has long been considered Afrotropical (Chapin 1932, Ripley & Bond 1966), but floristically the archipelago is more complex (Ripley & Bond 1966, references therein). Our ongoing work on the taxonomy of Socotran birds reveals that several taxa previously considered endemic to the island are better considered synonyms of African or even wider-ranging African and Arabian forms (Kirwan in press b), whilst in other respects diversity in this ancient archipelago has been underestimated (Kirwan in press a).

*Validity of race yemenensis*

We must now discuss the validity of *R. s. yemenensis* (type from Wasel [=Wasil: Brooks *et al.* 1987], in montane northern Yemen), which was described (as a subspecies of *percivali*, at that time considered specifically) on the basis of it lacking black on the forehead, having the head and nape brighter rufous-brown, a browner mantle and darker grey rump and uppertail-coverts. The vast majority of those specimens of *Rhynchostruthus* from Yemen held in NHM are from the putative range of *yemenensis*. At the time of description, *percivali* was considered restricted to the Hadramaut (in eastern Yemen; type-locality Yeshbun [=Yashbum: Porter *et al.* 1996]). Some *percivali* from Ta'izz and Lodar (=Lawdar), the latter locality very close to the type-locality of *percivali* but the former closer to that of *yemenensis*,

**Table 5.** Principle component (PC) loadings on mensural characters of female Golden-winged Grosbeaks *Rhynchostruthus socotranus* for the three taxa.

**Tableau 5.** Importance des composantes principales (PC) de mensurations de femelles du Grand-verdier à ailes d'or *Rhynchostruthus socotranus* pour les trois taxons.

Character	PC1	PC2	PC3	PC4
Wing	0.5386	0.2569	-0.7166	-0.3611
Tail	0.4175	0.7446	0.4845	0.191
Bill-length	0.5371	-0.4152	-0.1109	0.7258
Bill-depth	0.4971	-0.4551	0.4893	-0.5535
Eigen values	2.399	0.830	0.429	0.223
% variance	61.84	21.38	11.05	5.73

have a black frontal band to a greater or lesser extent. Three males from Ta'izz, taken in December 1948, range from having no black (1965M.17017) or little black (1965M.17021) to a reasonably well-developed black frontal black band (1965M.17019). Birds from Amiri district are also obviously variable in the amount of black. The other features used to describe *yemenensis* appear to be similarly variable in the material to hand, leading us to agree with those previous authors who have regarded it as a synonym of *percivali*.

*Gaps in our knowledge*

Other than the data to hand concerning external morphology and mensural characteristics it is difficult to make any comparisons between the three taxa. Available knowledge of Arabian and Socotran on the one hand, and Somali birds on the other was ably summarised by Fry & Keith (2004). For *louisae* our data are virtually non-existent; to all intents and purposes its natural history and even its vocalisations are entirely unknown. Such a paucity of information is wholly unsurprising given the extreme lack of field work in the country in recent years (see Ash & Miskell 1998), but the majority of the ranges of *percivali* and *socotranus*, the latter especially, are also very little visited by ornithologists and birdwatchers. Within the last decade there has been scarcely any such activity in Yemen (the bulk of the range of *percivali*) and whilst Oman has enjoyed much greater attention during this period, *Rhynchostruthus* is distinctly uncommon in that country and confined to an area that is comparatively less visited (Eriksen & Sargeant 2000), though it is rather commoner in the wooded Mahrah in adjacent eastern Yemen (Martins *et al.* 1996). On the other

hand, since 1993 ornithological visits to Socotra have become decidedly more regular, but this is merely relative; prior to that date, no dedicated avifaunal work had been undertaken on the island since the 1960s! Where limited comparisons are possible, namely between *socotranus* and *percivali*, the data appear to show much overlap. Courtship displays are seemingly identical and vocally the two appear very similar (Fry & Keith 2004; GMK pers. obs.), though more data are welcome. Jennings (1995) suggested that Arabian birds have a prolonged breeding season, but many data on breeding biology are still lacking for both *socotranus* and *percivali* (see Fry & Keith 2004, Gedeon & Neumann 2004). However, we suspect that Socotran birds, on average, almost certainly breed slightly earlier than those in Oman, at least, but this is nothing more than a reflection of prevailing climatic factors and certainly not taxonomically significant.

*Conservation implications of a revised taxonomy*

If three rather one species of *Rhynchostruthus* were to be acknowledged, could this have important consequences for conservation? Golden-winged Grosbeak *sensu lato* was considered a candidate species for inclusion in the African Red Data Book (Collar & Stuart 1985), but was only ranked as Least Concern two decades later (BirdLife International 2004). Currently, *percivali* is known from six Important Bird Areas (IBAs), *socotranus* from two (Evans 1994), and *louisae* from three IBAs (Robertson 2001).

The taxon *percivali* is generally scarce and difficult to locate even at known sites, with the exception perhaps of those in Yemen (R. F. Porter *in litt.* 2006), and its population is estimated at c.3,000 pairs (i.e. c.9,000 individuals including

juveniles and non-breeders), with 500 pairs in Saudi Arabia, 500 pairs in Oman (although this may be optimistic: J. Atkins *in litt.* 2006), and c.2,000 pairs in Yemen (M. C. Jennings *in litt.* 2006; information from Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Arabia). There have not been any records from the region between Aden and Mukallah since 1950, despite better observer coverage, suggesting that it is very rare there or that its range has contracted (M. C. Jennings *in litt.* 2006). Although the species' habitat has been degraded in Yemen, it appears to be no more abundant in south-west Saudi Arabia where the habitat is more intact. Given uncertainty over whether the taxon is declining, it would probably warrant Near Threatened status (almost meeting criterion C2a(ii) if assessed separately).

Taxon *socotranus* is widespread on Socotra, where it is locally common, with a population estimate of c.6,500 individuals (R. F. Porter *in litt.* 2006). None of its habitats appear to be threatened, so this taxon would arguably qualify as Least Concern if assessed separately, albeit with a caveat that any evidence of declines or threats would qualify it for Near Threatened or even Vulnerable.

The status of *louisae* appears to be especially poorly known, owing in large part to a lack of observers within its range. Though formerly quite common, at least until the 1930s, it now appears uncommon and difficult to find, even in areas where it might be expected, with few recent records. It may be declining, perhaps due to habitat loss (particularly in the western part of its range), but poor rainfall in recent years may be more important, though there were good rains in 2005–06 (J. Miskell *in litt.* 2006). There are no published population estimates, but given its small range and apparent scarcity, a precautionary assessment might place numbers below 10,000 individuals, in several subpopulations. If assessed separately, *louisae* would appear to merit Near Threatened status, almost meeting criterion C2a(ii).

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# Rediscovery of the Madagascar Pochard *Aythya innotata* in northern Madagascar

Lily-Arison René de Roland<sup>a</sup>, The Seing Sam<sup>a</sup>, Marius P. H. Rakotondratsima<sup>a</sup> and Russell Thorstrom<sup>b</sup>

**Redécouverte du Fuligule de Madagascar *Aythya innotata* en Madagascar du nord.** Le Fuligule de Madagascar *Aythya innotata*, espèce gravement menacée d'extinction, a été redécouvert en novembre 2006 sur un petit lac peu profond du nord du pays: jusqu'à cinq mâles, quatre femelles et quatre jeunes d'environ deux semaines ont été observés. Lors d'une deuxième visite au site en décembre, environ 20 individus ont été notés et cinq ont été trouvés sur un autre lac, à 3 km du premier. En janvier 2007, 16 oiseaux, dont deux jeunes, ont été comptés. Le nombre total de Fuligules de Madagascar pour les trois visites est estimé à 20–25 individus. Le site hébergeait également environ 60 Grèbes malgaches *Tachybaptus pelzenii*, 21 Crabiers blancs *Ardeola idae*, 11 Canards de Meller *Anas melleri* et trois Râles de Madagascar *Rallus madagascariensis*.

**Summary.** The Critically Endangered Madagascar Pochard *Aythya innotata* was rediscovered in November 2006 on a small shallow lake in northern Madagascar, where up to five males, four females and four young c.2 weeks old were observed. When the site was revisited in December, c.20 individuals were noted and five were found at another lake, 3 km away. In January 2007, a total of 16 birds, including two young, was counted. The total number of Madagascar Pochards during the three visits is estimated at 20–25 individuals. Other threatened waterbirds present at the site included c.60 Madagascar Little Grebes *Tachybaptus pelzenii*, 21 Madagascar Pond Herons *Ardeola idea*, 11 Meller's Ducks *Anas melleri* and three Madagascar Rails *Rallus madagascariensis*.

The Critically Endangered Madagascar Pochard *Aythya innotata* is the rarest of Madagascar's endemic birds and was recently classified as one of just 15 species in the world that is Possibly Extinct (BirdLife International 2004,

Butchart *et al.* 2006, Young & Kear 2006). Initially known only from Lake Alaotra, on the central plateau of north-eastern Madagascar, but subsequently recorded elsewhere (Collar & Stuart 1985), it was considered relatively common at



**Figures 1–3.** Madagascar Pochards *Aythya innotata*, northern Madagascar, 2 November 2006: a pair with two young, an adult male, and a pair (Lily-Arison René de Roland/The Peregrine Fund)

Fuligules de Madagascar *Aythya innotata*, Madagascar du nord, 2 novembre 2006: un couple avec deux jeunes, un mâle adulte, et un couple (Lily-Arison René de Roland/The Peregrine Fund)

Alaotra in the 1930s (Delacour 1932, Rand 1936, Young & Smith 1989, Young & Kear 2006).

The decline of the Madagascar Pochard probably commenced in the 1940s and 1950s, and has been linked with the degradation of lake and marshland habitat by introduced exotic plant and fish species, conversion to rice paddies, and burning (Young & Smith 1989). By the 1960s sightings at Lake Alaotra had become rare and the last observation of more than one bird was at Lake Ambohibao in 1970 (Salvan 1970, Wilmé 1994) and the last confirmed record in 1991, when a lone male was captured by local wildfowlers at Lake Alaotra and subsequently transferred to Antananarivo, where it was held in the Zoological and Botanical Gardens until its death a year later (Wilmé 1993). Despite intensive searches and a publicity campaign in the 1990s, the species was not found again (Wilmé 1994, Pidgeon 1996, BirdLife International 2004).

In November 2006, L-ARdR and TSS were conducting bird surveys in a remote area of northern Madagascar with many small lakes and habitats ranging from grassland to tropical forest. On 1 November, an unusual duck with bright white eyes was found in the middle of a c.28 ha lake, in the company of White-faced Whistling Ducks *Dendrocygna viduata*, Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhynchos*, Meller's Ducks *A. melleri* and Madagascar Little Grebes *Tachybaptus pelzenii*. It was observed from 14.00 to 17.45 h using binoculars and a spotting scope, and the observers concluded that the bird was a Madagascar Pochard, based on it being a brown diving duck with a dark head, white irides, white on the flanks and a white wingbar in flight. During the following two days, 13 individuals were observed and photographed, comprising five males, four females and four young of c.2 weeks old, which always kept close to an adult female. Adult males had dark brown plumage which became whitish on the belly and undertail-coverts, gleaming white irides and a lead grey bill with a black nail. Adult females were duller with dark brown irides; bill and nail colours were the same. Both sexes exhibited a conspicuous white wingbar in flight.

Pochards were always encountered in twos (male–male or male–female) or trios (one male with two females), and all such 'groups' maintained close contact. They appeared to prefer the

centre of the lake to rest and roost, and when moved towards the edges due to wind and wave action would return swiftly to the middle of the lake.

The pochards dived frequently, remaining underwater for 1–2 minutes. The four young also dived, but stayed underwater for shorter durations. During the two and a half days of observations, the pochards were seen to fly from one side of the lake to the other twice, and on two occasions two individuals flew together for c.4 minutes c.10 m above the lake. The birds were silent and showed no signs of competition with, or aggression towards, the other waterbirds present. On three occasions, the female with young closely consorted with Meller's Ducks and Madagascar Little Grebes, although this apparent 'association' was quite plausibly coincidental.

This lake and the surrounding area is part of the central high plateau ecoregion. The lake is in a volcanic depression, is small and surrounded by tropical forest in the bowl, and grassland and forest on the rim. There is a narrow band (c.15 metres in width) of reeds (*Phragmites*) bordering the lake and the nearby forest.

During the first week of December 2006, L-ARdR and MPHR revisited the lake with Glyn Young from the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and observed at least 15 adults and nine young. At another lake, 3 km from the first, five adults were found, but it is unclear whether or not these had already been counted at the first lake. On 19–20 January 2007, L-ARdR and MPHR, accompanied by RT, recorded 16 adult pochards and two young c.10 days old. On the basis of the three visits, we estimate the currently known population of Madagascar Pochards at c.20–25 individuals. Impressive numbers of other threatened waterbirds were present at the site, including c.60 Madagascar Little Grebes (Vulnerable), 21 Madagascar Pond Herons *Ardeola ideea* (Endangered), 11 Meller's Ducks (Endangered) and three Madagascar Rails *Rallus madagascariensis* (Vulnerable).

## Discussion

Madagascar Pochard closely resembles Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* and Hardhead *A. australis*. All are small brown diving ducks that are sexually dimorphic in eye colour. Australian

Hardhead is restricted to the Australian region, whereas Ferruginous Duck breeds in the Palearctic and winters to the south including Africa, with a recent record from Seychelles (Skerrett 1999). Although there was formerly a breeding population of Ferruginous Ducks in Africa, this no longer exists (Brown *et al.* 1982), and no other *Aythya* species is known to breed close to Madagascar.

Little is known concerning the life history of the Madagascar Pochard, a diving duck that prefers shallow and marshy lakes with small pools surrounded by emergent vegetation (Young & Smith 1989). Historically, it was known principally from the Lake Alaotra region, but this well-surveyed area has yielded only one sighting in recent decades, suggesting that human persecution and habitat modification have been the main causes of its extirpation there. The lakes where the pochard has been rediscovered are surrounded by pristine tropical forest and grassland with no evidence of human disturbance or degradation. The lack of disturbance is suspected to be the main reason for the pochard's survival in this region. The population has probably been at this site for many years, given the lack of avifaunal (and other faunal) surveys of this region, with all previous searches for the pochard concentrating on the environs of Lake Alaotra.

Lake Alaotra was considered prime pochard habitat, due to the presence of abundant emergent vegetation and numerous quiet pools (Young & Kear 2006). The new site lacks emergent vegetation and fish. The site comprises four shallow lakes, with the main lake varying between 1.5 to 3.0 m deep, and supporting a benthic flora and fauna suitable for pochards. There is no competition from exotic fish (*Tilapia*) as at Lake Alaotra, and there is no hunting. Possibly, similar lakes in the region and between the new site and Lake Alaotra have been modified by man, making them unsuitable habitat for breeding pochards, or have yet to be surveyed for pochards, or pochards have been extirpated from them. Another reason that pochards have persisted at the rediscovery site is perhaps the reeds and marshy vegetation bordering the lake, which presumably constitutes important nesting habitat (although no wild nest has been described, other *Aythya* are known to nest in such areas), and is absent from two of the nearby

lakes. The site of the rediscovery is some distance from Alaotra, but is close to a former wetland basin like Lake Alaotra and those elsewhere on the Madagascan Central Plateau. We therefore suggest that future surveys to find the pochards should include expanses of former high-plateau wetlands.

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*Pertinax-winged Nightjar*



# Swierstra's Francolin *Francolinus swierstrai*: a bibliography and summary of specimens

Michael S. L. Mills

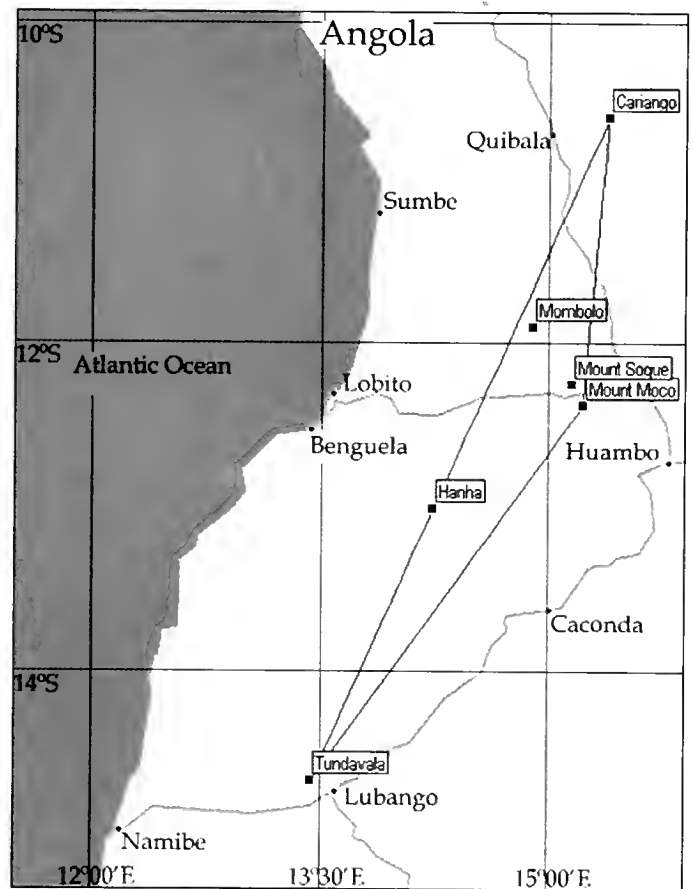
**Le Francolin de Swierstra *Francolinus swierstrai*: bibliographie et catalogue des spécimens.** Le Francolin de Swierstra *Francolinus swierstrai*, endémique aux montagnes de l'Angola occidental, est considérée comme une espèce menacée (avec le statut de 'Vulnérable'). En l'absence d'observations entre 1971 et 2005, nous connaissons très peu de choses sur cette espèce. Cette note résume l'information disponible, basée sur 19 spécimens récoltés de 1907 à 1971, et présente une bibliographie complète, dans l'espoir d'encourager plus de recherches sur l'espèce.

**Summary.** Swierstra's Francolin *Francolinus swierstrai* is the only threatened bird endemic to the montane region of Western Angola. With no sightings between 1971 and August 2005, knowledge of this species is very poor. This note presents a summary of available information, based on 19 specimens collected between 1907 and 1971, and provides a complete bibliography, in order to encourage further work on this high-priority species.

Swierstra's Francolin *Francolinus swierstrai* (or Swierstra's Spurfowl *Pternistis swierstrai*) was last recorded in February 1971 (Pinto 1983), until its rediscovery at Mt Moco in August 2005 (Mills & Dean in prep.). This Vulnerable species (BirdLife International 2000, 2004) is the only threatened bird endemic to montane western Angola, an area of critical importance for biodiversity conservation (Bibby *et al.* 1992, Stattersfield *et al.* 1998).

Swierstra's Francolin has a highly fragmented range of c.18,500 km<sup>2</sup> and is suspected, despite the complete lack of sightings for more than 30 years, to have a declining population estimated at 2,500–9,999. It does not occur in any protected area. The main threat it faces is loss of its restricted habitat. At Mt Moco, thought to be the most important site for its conservation, clearing and burning of forest and other suitable habitat has been reported since the 1970s (Huntley 1974) and continues to this day (Mills & Dean in prep.). Hunting also is suspected to be a threat (BirdLife International 2005).

Most available information on the species has been summarised elsewhere (Pinto 1983, Collar & Stuart 1985, Urban *et al.* 1986, Johnsgard 1988, McGowan 1994, BirdLife International 2000, Dean 2000, Madge & McGowan 2002). However, given how little is known about Swierstra's Francolin, its high conservation importance and recent changes in the political situation in Angola, I hope that a complete summary of



**Figure 1.** Distribution map of Swierstra's Francolin *Francolinus swierstrai*, with collection localities boxed and joined to show Extent Of Occurrence as defined by BirdLife International (2000), and used to calculate estimated range of 18,500 km<sup>2</sup>.

Carte de distribution du Francolin de Swierstra *Francolinus swierstrai*, avec le nom des localités d'où proviennent les spécimens encadrées et reliées entre elles pour montrer 'l'étendue de la répartition' comme définie par BirdLife International (2000) et utilisée pour calculer la répartition estimée à 18,500 km<sup>2</sup>.

**Table 1.** Chronological list of the 19 known specimens of Swierstra's Francolin *Francolinus swierstrai*; the accuracy of the 20th entry is unknown and is a presumed duplication of one of the previous two entries.

**Tableau 1.** Liste chronologique des 19 spécimens connus du Francolin de Swierstra's *Francolinus swierstrai*; l'exactitude de la 20ème donnée est inconnue – elle est présumée être une duplication d'une des deux précédentes.

Museum abbreviations / Abréviations des musées: MNUC = Museu de História Natural—Museu de Zoologia, du Universidade de Coimbra, Portugal; TV = Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, South Africa; CMNH = Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh; FMNH = Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago; AMNH = American Museum of Natural History, New York; BMNH = Natural History Museum, Tring; IICA = Instituto de Investigação Científica do Angola, Lubango, Angola.

sDate	Collector	Locality	Sex/Age	Collection	Specimen #	Source
1907	T. Cruz	Hanha	M	MNUC		Carreira 1990
7 Jun 1927	C. P. Chapman	Mombolo	M/Subad	TV	14713	Roberts 1929; T. Cassidy <i>in litt.</i> 2006.
20 Feb 1931	W. R. & L. Boulton	Mt Moco	M	CMNH	109388	S. Rogers <i>in litt.</i> 2006
1 Sep 1954	G. Heinrich	Mt Soque	F/Ad	FMNH	419128	Traylor 1960; M. Hennen <i>in litt.</i> 2006
1 Sep 1954	G. Heinrich	Mt Soque	F/Juv	FMNH	419130	Traylor 1960; M. Hennen <i>in litt.</i> 2006
3 Sep 1954	G. Heinrich	Mt Soque	M/Ad	FMNH	419126	Traylor 1960; M. Hennen <i>in litt.</i> 2006
6 Sep 1954	G. Heinrich	Mt Soque	M/Ad	FMNH	419124	Traylor 1960; M. Hennen <i>in litt.</i> 2006
8 Sep 1954	G. Heinrich	Mt Moco	F/Juv	FMNH	419129	Traylor 1960; M. Hennen <i>in litt.</i> 2006
24 Sep 1954	G. Heinrich	Mt Moco	M/Ad	FMNH	419127	Traylor 1960; M. Hennen <i>in litt.</i> 2006
24 Sep 1954	G. Heinrich	Mt Moco	M	AMNH	800681	T. Trombone <i>in litt.</i> 2006
5 Oct 1954	G. Heinrich	Mt Moco	M/Ad	FMNH	419125	Traylor 1960; M. Hennen <i>in litt.</i> 2006
17 Aug 1957	G. Lathbury	Mt Moco	M/Ad	BMNH	1957.35.6	Hall (1960); M. Adams <i>in litt.</i> 2006
22 Aug 1957	T. Archer	Mt Moco	M (Imm)	**AMNH	707874	T. Trombone <i>in litt.</i> 2006
1962		Tundavala	F	IICA		Pinto (1983); pers. obs.
11 Feb 1965	*F. Nobsegu	Tundavala	M/Ad	IICA	10530	pers. obs.
Not known		Tundavala	F	IICA		Pinto (1983); pers. obs.
25 Mar 1968		Tundavala	F	IICA		Pinto (1983); pers. obs.
Feb 1971		Cariango	F	IICA		Pinto (1983); pers. obs.
Feb 1971		Cariango	F	IICA		Pinto (1983); pers. obs.
*31 Aug 1979	*J. Callos	Cariango	F/Ad	IICA	35123	pers. obs.

\*transcription may be incorrect

\*\*initially held in the BMNH

specimens collected (Table 1) and an annotated bibliography will stimulate further interest in this little-known species. BirdLife International (2005) should be consulted for research priorities. One such is to conduct species surveys, for which knowledge of calls will aid identification and recordings for call-up enhance ability to detect birds. Descriptions of its vocalisations (Mills in prep.) and some information on its current status at the Mt Moco Important Bird Area will be published elsewhere (Mills & Dean in prep.).

**A history of collecting**

Swierstra's Francolin was first collected at Hanha in Benguela province (13°18'S 14°12'E; see Fig. 1) in 1907 (erroneously dated 1935 by Collar & Stuart 1985), by Teodoro Cruz (Themido 1936, 1938a), but was not recognised at the time as an undescribed species. Twenty years later, in June

1927, the second specimen was collected at Mombola (=Mombolo; 11°55'S 14°51'E) in south-west Cuanza Sul province by C. P. Chapman. This specimen, a subadult male, was described by Roberts (1929) as a new species, *Chaetopus swierstrai*, and named after Mr C. J. Swierstra, then Director of the Transvaal Museum. Seven years later, Themido (1936) described as a new species *Francolinus cruzi*, using the male collected in 1907 as the type-specimen, which was subsequently recognised as being identical to *swierstrai*, thus *cruzi* is a synonym (White 1945).

The third specimen, another male, was collected at Mt Moco, Huambo province (12°25'S 15°11'E), in 1931 by Wolfrid Rudyerd Boulton Jr. and Laura Boulton and is held in the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh. The first female was finally collected in 1954 by Gerd Heinrich (1958). He obtained a series of eight

birds from Mt Moco and nearby Mt Soque (12°17'S 15°07'E). Seven of these are in the Field Museum of Natural History (FMNH), and were examined and reported on by Traylor (1960). Traylor (1963) mentions that an adult male in breeding condition was collected on Mt Moco on 5 August; this is presumably an error, as Heinrich visited Mt Moco from 18 September to 5 October and Traylor cites no other source for his information other than Heinrich's seven specimens in the FMNH. Peters (1934) mentions that the FMNH possesses one or more specimens from Chitau, but this is almost certainly an error; FMNH does not currently hold specimens from anywhere other than Mt Moco and Mt Soque (M. Hennen *in litt.* 2006; The Field Museum 2006). The remaining specimen collected by Heinrich is housed in the American Museum of Natural History, New York, which also has one of two specimens, both males, collected at Mt Moco by the British Museum of Natural History expedition to Angola in 1957. The other specimen is held at The Natural History Museum, Tring, UK.

Pinto (1983) reported on the six specimens in the Instituto de Investigação Científica do Angola (IICA) collection held in Lubango, Angola, four from Tundavala in Huíla province, the first of which was collected in 1962, and two from Cariango, Cuanza Sul province. Five of the six are females (skins and labels examined; pers. obs.). Pinto (1983) wrote that the last-known record of the species was of two specimens collected in February 1971 at Cariango, Cuanza Sul, 200 km north of Mombolo. However, one of these, in the collection of the IICA, appears to be labelled as having been collected at Cariango on 31 August 1979 (see Fig. 2). Either the label correctly reads 31 August 1971 or has been incorrectly relabelled since Pinto (1983). It is unlikely to be an additional specimen, because Pinto (1983) reports that there are six specimens in the collection, which there still are, and if it was collected in 1979 Pinto would not have seen it.

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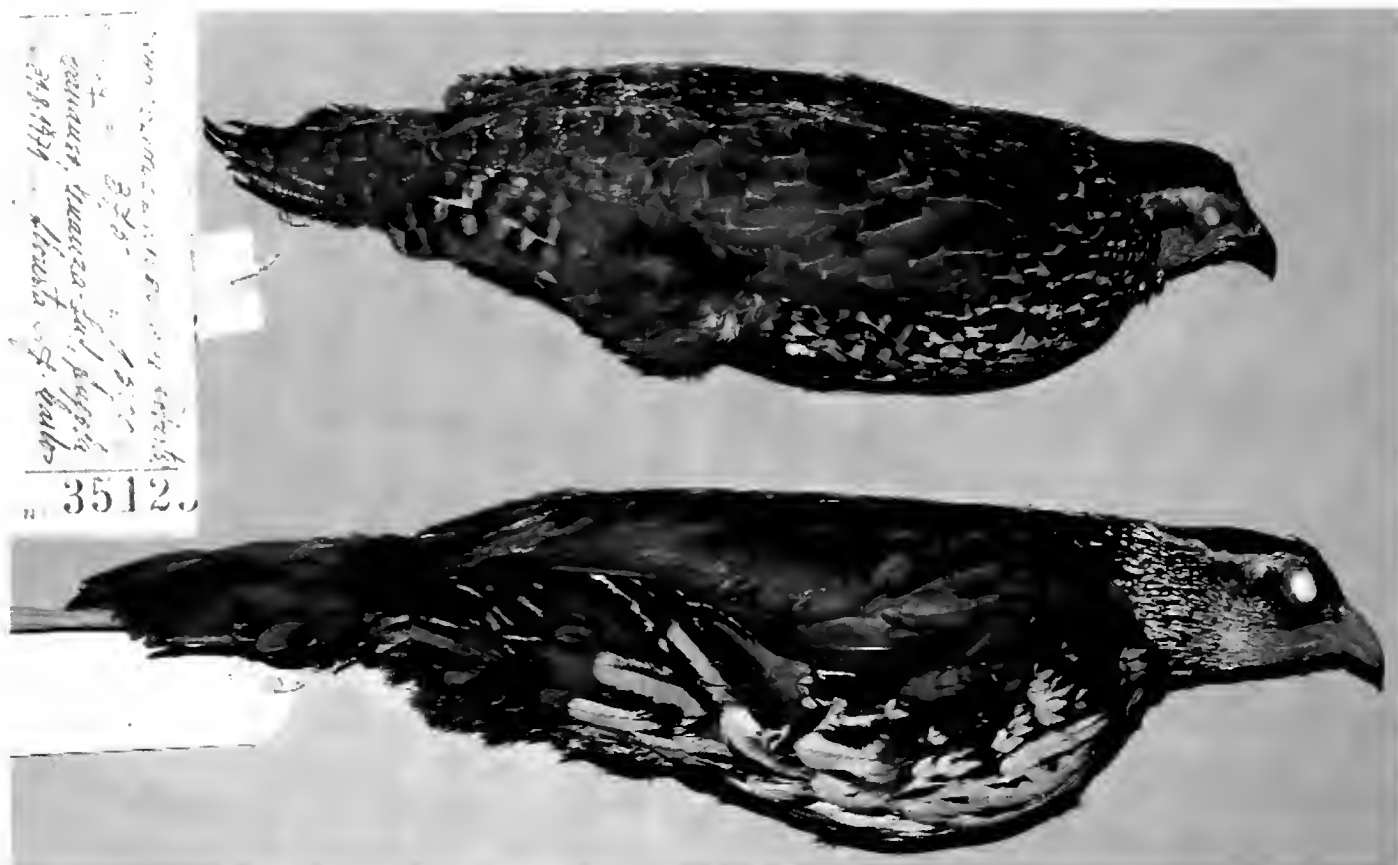


Figure 2. A female (top) and male (bottom) specimen of Swierstra's Francolin *Francolinus swierstrai* from the collection of the Instituto de Investigação Científica do Angola in Lubango (city), Angola, with the label of the female enlarged (top left) to show a date of what appears to read '31-8-1979' (Michael S. L. Mills)

Spécimens femelle (en haut) et mâle (en bas) du Francolin de Swierstra *Francolinus swierstrai* de la collection du Instituto de Investigação Científica do Angola à Lubango, Angola, avec l'étiquette de la femelle élargie (en haut à gauche) pour montrer la date qui semble être '31-8-1979' (Michael S. L. Mills)

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# First record of Crested *Francolinus sephaena* × Swainson's Francolin *F. swainsonii* hybrids?

D. Engelbrecht and J. Grosel

Première donnée d'hybridation entre le Francolin huppé *Francolinus sephaena* et le Francolin de Swainson *F. swainsonii*? Du 30 avril à la fin juillet 2005, un groupe de quatre francolins a été observé dans la réserve de Polokwane, province du Limpopo, Afrique du Sud, comprenant un Francolin huppé *Francolinus sephaena* adulte et trois oiseaux très différents qui ne correspondaient à aucune description dans la littérature. Trois possibilités d'interprétation sont suggérées: soit une livrée de couleur jusqu'ici inconnue du Francolin huppé, soit des hybrides ou des individus aberrants. Les auteurs postulent que les trois oiseaux pourraient bien représenter les premiers cas d'hybridation entre le Francolin huppé et le Francolin de Swainson *F. swainsonii*.

On 30 April 2005, a covey of four francolins was observed in a clearing at Polokwane Game Reserve, Limpopo province, South Africa (23°58'S 29°28'E). The covey comprised an adult Crested Francolin *Francolinus (Dendroperdix) sephaena* and three strikingly different-looking birds (Fig. 1). Their plumage coloration did not match any description in the literature, namely deep russet-brown, with white streaks and stripes on the breast, belly and upperparts. They had a black mask and contrasting grey crown, affording them a capped appearance. The neck and throat were also paler grey. The bill was black and the legs red. All three were noticeably larger than the Crested Francolin. They were seen on several occasions in the same general area until the end of July 2005. The birds were heard calling twice and their vocalisations matched Crested Francolin. On another occasion, they responded to playback of Crested Francolin but not to Swainson's Francolin (or Spurfowl) *Francolinus (Pternistis) swainsonii*.

The existence of these birds raises interesting questions. Do they represent a hitherto undescribed colour morph of Crested Francolin? Could they be hybrids, and if so, between which species? Or are they aberrant individuals?

Three subspecies of Crested Francolin, *F. s. sephaena*, *F. s. rovuma* and *F. s. zambesiae*, are recognised, based mainly on plumage coloration (Hockey *et al.* 2005). None of the descriptions of the subspecies match the colour variation we observed. Given the difference in size between the Crested Francolin and the others, we are reluctant to ascribe their different appearance to an aber-

rant colour morph. It is also unlikely that the birds represent a mutation, as mutations are chance events usually affecting a single individual. It is unlikely that the same chance event would affect three birds identically. However unlikely it may seem, we believe that these birds may be hybrids. As far as we can establish, there are no reports in the literature of hybrids involving Crested Francolins (Urban *et al.* 1986, Little *et al.* 2000, Hockey *et al.* 2005, Viljoen 2005). If they are indeed hybrids, then which species might be involved? In addition to Crested Francolin, Polokwane Game Reserve hosts four other francolin and spurfowl species: Coqui Francolin *F. (Peliperdix) coqui*, Shelley's Francolin *F. (Scleroptila) shelleyi*, Natal Francolin (or Spurfowl) *F. (Pternistis) natalensis* and Swainson's Francolin. The three birds most closely resembled Swainson's Francolin in respect of plumage coloration. Although Swainson's Francolin is known to hybridise with two of its congeners, namely Red-necked *F. (Pternistes) afer* and Natal Francolins (Little *et al.* 2000), the chances that it would interbreed with the taxonomically distant Crested Francolin seem very slim. Nevertheless, given their appearance, we postulate that these birds may well be the first recorded Crested × Swainson's Francolin hybrids.

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**Figure 1.** Is this a Crested Francolin *Francolinus sephaena* × Swainson's Francolin *F. swainsonii* hybrid? Polokwane Game Reserve, South Africa, 2005 (Derek Engelbrecht)

Ceci est-il un hybride entre le Francolin huppé *Francolinus sephaena* et le Francolin de Swainson *F. swainsonii*? (Derek Engelbrecht)

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# A nest of Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* beside a temporal stream

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Un nid du Picatharte du Cameroun *Picathartes oreas* à côté d'un cours d'eau temporaire. Le 12 décembre 2005, au pied du Mont Cameroun, nous avons levé un Picatharte du Cameroun *Picathartes oreas* adulte de son nid, situé à environ 2 m de hauteur dans le lit d'un cours d'eau asséché envahi par une végétation dense. Le nid contenait deux oisillons nus âgés de quelques jours. Le site se trouvait à environ 1 km de la route Limbe–Idenao, à la lisière de la forêt et de plantations de palmiers à huile à environ c.190 m alt. Cette observation suggère que des cours d'eau asséchés peuvent constituer des sites de nidification convenant au Picatharte du Cameroun, qui normalement construit son nid sur des parois de grottes ou de rochers inclinés à l'intérieur de la forêt à canopée fermée.

Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* is a scarce to locally not uncommon resident in the forest zone, from south-east Nigeria and Bioko to Gabon and Congo-Brazzaville (Fry *et al.* 2000, Borrow & Demey 2001, Mamonekene & Bokandza-Paco 2006). It constructs its mud nest on cave walls or overhanging rocks within closed-canopy primary forest (Thompson & Fotso 1995), which may explain its localised occurrence. The species is known from the south-west slopes of Mt Cameroon (Tye 1987), an area with one of the most intact altitudinal gradients of tropical forest in West Africa. Breeding has been recorded in steep-sided bare rocky gorges in the upper parts of the forest, at c.700 m (Tye 1987).

In December 2005, we spent two days at the foot of Mt Cameroon near Batoke village (Mile 11). On 12 December we flushed an adult Grey-necked Picathartes from its nest within closed-canopy forest, just c.10 m from the edge. The nest was sited in a pool-like enlargement of a dry riverbed overgrown with dense vegetation (Figs. 1–2), but without vegetation immediately around it. It was attached to a vertical rock face c.2 m above ground and sheltered by a small overhang. Although the nest was relatively conspicuous close to, it proved hard to see from a distance. The nest contained two featherless chicks just a few days old. Having taken photographs, we left the site immediately to prevent the nest being abandoned.

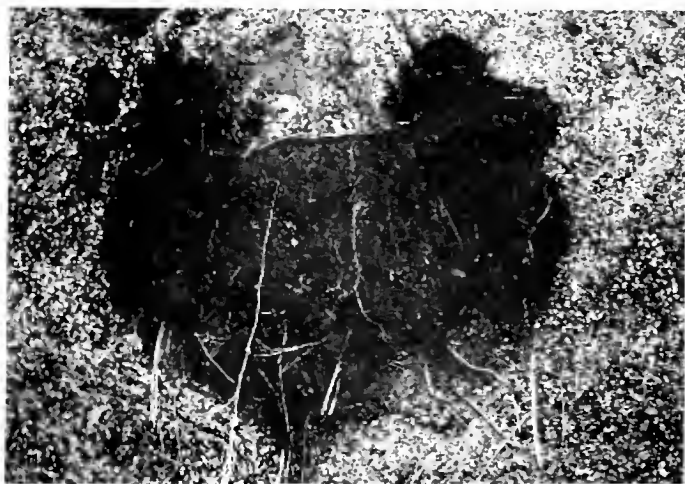


Figure 1. Nest of Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* in dry riverbed at the foot of Mt Cameroon, 12 December 2005 (David Hořák)

Nid du Picatharte du Cameroun *Picathartes oreas* dans un cours d'eau asséché au pied du Mont Cameroun, 12 décembre 2005 (David Hořák)



Figure 2. Environs of the nest of Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas*, Mt Cameroon, 12 December 2005 (David Hořák)

Environs du nid du Picatharte du Cameroun *Picathartes oreas*, Mont Cameroun, 12 décembre 2005 (David Hořák)

Concealed by nearby vegetation, we observed the adult return within a few minutes. The site is at c.190 m, c.1 km from the main Limbe–Idenao road and c.50 m from an oil-palm plantation, where local people were constructing a dam on the stream (04°04'N 09°04'E). It was c.5 km from the dry stony riverbed with steep rocky cliffs where a Grey-necked Picathartes was observed in January 2004 (Sedláček *et al.* 2005).

Although Grey-necked Picathartes is reported also to nest on cliffs below dry 'waterfalls' (Fry *et al.* 2000), nesting on the bank of a temporal stream has apparently not been documented previously. It has, however, been reported for its congener, White-necked Picathartes *P. gymnocephalus*, which has been found to nest alone on banks of watercourses when large, dry, rocky overhangs are absent (Allport 1991). Our record, and the sighting in January 2004, suggest that the banks of temporal streams may constitute suitable breeding sites in the dry season. Although picathartes are reported usually to breed in small colonies (Borrow & Demey 2001), we did not find any other nests in the vicinity. Colonial breeding may be the result of suitable breeding sites such as steep-sided rocks in closed-canopy forest being spatially restricted, whereas this is not the case for dry riverbeds. Our finding also supports the assumption that *P. oreas* tolerates a certain amount of human disturbance.

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# Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* breeding in riverine situations

Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire

**Nidification du Picatharte du Cameroun *Picathartes oreas* au bord de rivières.** L'auteur rapporte deux cas de nidification du Picatharte du Cameroun *Picathartes oreas* sur des rochers le long ou dans le cours d'une grande rivière: un nid isolé sur un rocher situé sur un îlot dans la rivière Boumba (sud-est du Cameroun), et une colonie d'au moins 30 nids sur une bande rocheuse longeant la rivière Nkébé au pied du Mont Nlonako.

Hořák *et al.* (2007) observed an isolated nest of Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* on a vertical rock face beside a dry streambed at the foot of Mt Cameroon. This is not the first observation of Grey-necked Picathartes breeding in a riverine situation. On 30 November 1997 I discovered a nest on a small vertical rock face in an islet of flooded forest on the east bank of the Boumba River (02°40'N 15°13'E), south-east Cameroon. This locality is at the edge of Boumba-Bek Faunal Reserve (now a national park), in primary forest. The rock face was 3 m high, a few metres long and the nest was 2 m above ground. At the end of the long rainy season (April/May–November), the nest was unoccupied and had perhaps not been used for a year or so. My guide (a local fisherman) had seen the birds on the islet in previous years. This represented a major extension of known range to the east (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2000). In late November the islet was accessible only by boat but would have been connected to the east bank of the river in the dry season. Some populations of Grey-necked Picathartes breed in the rains (Ash 1991, Fotso 1993), others in the dry season extending into the short rains of March–April (Brosset & Erard 1986, in Gabon, where the rainy season is bimodal). A nest observed by R. J. Dowsett and myself in Monte Alen National Park, Equatorial Guinea (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1999), contained two eggs on 3 February, in the middle of the main dry season. If the pair on the Boumba River bred in the rains, the nest site, being then in flooded forest, would be especially well protected from mammalian predation.

On 18 February 2001, my guide led me to a large colony of picathartes bordering the Nkébé River, in the foothills of Mt Nlonako, western

Cameroon, in primary forest (04°48'N 09°57'E: Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2001). The nests were placed on a vertical rock face c.100 m long and 10 m high: one end of this structure was accessible from a small sand beach (which would, however, have been flooded in the rainy season), the remainder were inaccessible, being right above a large and permanent river. It was impossible to view the whole of the rocky wall from the opposite bank, but there were at least 30 nests, some more worn than others. They were often grouped in twos (an old one and a fresher one), suggesting that new nests were built close to old ones. Thus 10–15 pairs were probably involved. February is in the middle of the dry season (of December–March), and the nests were unoccupied. The height of the nests varied from 1.5–7.0 m.

The advantage of using rock faces on the edge of rivers or surrounded by water is obvious, especially as regards mammalian predators, and this situation may be more widespread than hitherto suspected. White-necked Picathartes *P. gymnocephalus* has also been reported to do so: in addition to Allport (1991), cited by Hořák *et al.* (2007), Wood (1995) has described briefly a small colony (of 2–3 active nests) sited on a overhanging rock flanking a steep-sided stream, in eastern Sierra Leone.

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# Extension of breeding range of Preuss's Cliff Swallow *Hirundo preussi* into south-east Sierra Leone

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Extension de l'aire de nidification de l'Hirondelle de Preuss *Hirundo preussi* au sud-est de la Sierra Leone. L'Hirondelle de Preuss *Hirundo preussi*, une espèce typique de la zone de savane, a été trouvée nicheuse au sud-est de la Sierra Leone, près de Kenema (08°03'N 11°08'W). Ceci étend l'aire de nidification connue de 200 km vers le sud. L'observation de groupes de cette espèce sur des sites côtiers en Sierra Leone indique également une extension de l'aire de distribution. Une expansion similaire a été observée dans les pays limitrophes, ce qui pourrait être un signe de la détérioration des conditions dans la zone forestière ouest-africaine.

Preuss's Cliff Swallow *Hirundo preussi* is a relatively poorly known West African species found from Guinea-Bissau east to the Central African Republic but with a rather patchy known distribution. In the west of the range there are substantiated records from Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali and Burkina Faso (Dowsett 1993), with recent reports from Liberia (Demey 2005). Breeding records exist for most range states except Guinea-Bissau and Guinea (Dowsett 1993). Typically, the species avoids the forest zone in most of its range, normally being found in savanna-type habitats (Borrow & Demey 2001).

In Sierra Leone, Preuss's Cliff Swallow has been reported breeding in the far north with sightings from other sites in the north, all within Guinea savanna habitat (Tye 1985). Tye's observations extended the known range south-west by 400–500 km. In 2004–06 we observed Preuss's Cliff Swallows at several sites further south and west throughout Sierra Leone, and recorded breeding at a site some distance further south than previously known in the country.

Our records can be summarised as follows.

- 10 December 2004: over 300 birds at Kambia, near the Guinea border, feeding over the Greater Scarcies River (09°10'N 12°55'W), with several also at the Scarcies estuary at Kychom (08°55'N 13°10'W) on 12 January 2005.
- 22 January 2005: c.170 at Kissy, in Freetown, where the ferry leaves to Lungi (08°30'N 13°15'W).
- 18–23 March 2005: several hundred birds in Kenema (07°50'N 11°10'W), south-east

Sierra Leone, particularly around the small bridge west of the town centre. Breeding was not noted and there was no evidence of nest remains under the bridge in February 2006. None was present in the Kenema area on 24 September–13 October 2005, but up to 30 were around Kenema on 4–10 February 2006.

- 20 March 2005: a breeding colony was found at the abandoned police station at Mano Junction, north-east of Kenema (08°03'N 11°08'W). There were c.20 nests but none was complete (Fig. 1). All were placed under the eaves of the single-storey building. Large numbers were attending these nests, along with a pair of Lesser Striped Swallows *Hirundo abyssinica*. Similar numbers were seen there in February 2006, again nest building. This site is c.200 km south of the breeding localities discovered by Tye (1985).

## Discussion

Our records indicate a significant extension of Preuss's Cliff Swallow's breeding range in Sierra Leone, well into the forest zone. Sightings throughout the rest of the country also appear to reflect a shift in range.

Tye (1985) speculated whether his records represented a genuine range expansion or indicated that the species had been previously overlooked. The Kissy area of Freetown is a comparatively well-watched site, and absence of earlier records a good indicator of true absence. Although those at Kenema may have been overlooked in the past, this appears unlikely as the birds are in the vicinity of habitation. The discovery of breeding birds at nearby Mano Junction indeed suggests a genuine



**Figure 1.** Nests of Preuss's Cliff Swallow *Hirundo preussi* being constructed under the eaves of an abandoned police station at Mano Junction, south-east Sierra Leone, 20 March 2005 (J. Lindsell)

Nids de l'Hirondelle de Preuss *Hirundo preussi* en construction sous l'avant-toit d'un poste de police abandonné à Mano Junction, au sud-est de la Sierra Leone, 20 mars 2005 (J. Lindsell)

expansion in breeding range, consistent with observations from neighbouring countries.

Salewski *et al.* (2001) identified Preuss's Cliff Swallow as one of several species that appears to have shifted its range southwards in Côte d'Ivoire since 1985. They speculated that this may have been due to climate or habitat change, and felt that such a species would not have gone overlooked previously. Movement into the forest zone by this species appears to be confirmed by recent reports of a colony on the Liberian coast (Demey 2005) and a large colony on Ghana's Cape Coast (Demey 2002).

The records from Kenema indicate that the species is probably not resident in the area but a dry-season visitor. This swallow is migratory elsewhere in its range (Keith *et al.* 1992), with presence in coastal areas apparently restricted to the dry season (November–April), despite year-round observer presence.

The expansion in range of a savanna species into the forest zone could be taken as an indicator of the deteriorating condition of the West African forest zone, as Salewski *et al.* (2001) suggest. However, much of the forest clearance in Sierra Leone occurred as long as 100 years ago—e.g. the immediate surroundings of the large town of Kenema have been farm-bush for many decades—suggesting that species such as Preuss's Cliff Swallow do not necessarily respond rapidly to beneficial changes in habitat.

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# Nouvelles données sur la nidification de la Sterne caspienne *Sterna caspia* au Parc National du Diawling, Mauritanie

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New data on the breeding of Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* in Diawling National Park, Mauritania. A colony of Caspian Terns *Sterna caspia* was discovered in Aftout Es Saheli, Mauritania, at the periphery of Diawling National Park (16°41'N 16°22'W), on 20 February 2006. The site was surrounded by water of a mean depth of 20–50 cm. Nests were lined with dead *Tamarix* twigs, some were concealed below dead tree trunks and others were in old Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor* nests. Breeding was not synchronised: we observed eggs being incubated, eggs hatching, nests with chicks, and large chicks accompanying adults. The number of breeding pairs was estimated at 900. Nests contained a total of c.192 chicks and more than 50 large chicks were seen following adults. Previous studies estimated the number of pairs in Aftout at only 100 and no significant breeding had been recorded in the area since the 1970s. The West African population of Caspian Terns has dramatically increased in recent years and is now estimated at 45,000–60,000 individuals, whereas c.10 years ago there were just c.5,000 pairs.

Depuis sa création en 1991, le Parc National du Diawling (PND), Mauritanie, a développé une stratégie visant à recréer les conditions écologiques existant avant les transformations et le dysfonctionnement des écosystèmes à la suite de l'aménagement de la vallée du fleuve Sénégal. Grâce à l'appui de l'Union Mondiale pour la Nature (UICN), du Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial (FFEM) et d'autres partenaires, un projet intégré à un programme régional de conservation des zones humides a été mis en place. Les différents scénarios de gestion hydrologique testés jusqu'à présent, ainsi que les différents programmes de restauration, ont permis d'obtenir des résultats satisfaisants (Diagana & Diawara 2004). Ceux-ci se sont traduits par une augmentation progressive des effectifs des oiseaux d'eau. En 1994, le PND a été inscrit sur la liste des zones humides d'importance internationale de la convention de Ramsar. Depuis 1995, la zone du PND et sa périphérie renferment plus de 1% de l'effectif de la population de plusieurs espèces (Diagana *et al.* 2001). En janvier 2004, 62.305 oiseaux d'eau répartis en 90 espèces ont été recensés au PND, tandis qu'en janvier 2005 79.809 oiseaux ont été dénombrés (Ould Sidaty 2005b). Plusieurs espèces sont de retour en tant que nicheurs, parmi lesquelles le Grand Cormoran *Phalacrocorax carbo lucidus* (15.000 couples en 2005), le Cormoran africain *Phalacrocorax africanus* (1.500 couples), la Spatule d'Afrique

*Platalea alba* (600 couples), l'Ibis sacré *Threskiornis aethiopicus* (300 couples) et l'Anhinga d'Afrique *Anhinga rufa* (450 couples) (Ould Sidaty 2005a).

## Nidification de la Sterne caspienne *Sterna caspia* en 2006

Lors des investigations menées sur les colonies nicheuses du bas delta du fleuve Sénégal, un important site de nidification de la Sterne caspienne *Sterna caspia* a été découvert le 20 février 2006 dans l'Aftout Es Saheli, à la périphérie du Parc National du Diawling (16°41'N 16°22'W; Fig. 1), à quelques 150 km de Rosso. Le site, un îlot de quelques centaines de mètres carrés, est dépourvu de toute végétation; on n'y trouve que des restes de troncs et de branches mortes de tamarix et d'anciens nids de Flamants nains *Phoeniconaias minor* (Figs. 2–3). L'îlot est entouré d'eau d'environ 10 à 50 cm de profondeur, qui a permis aux sternes d'être à l'abri des prédateurs terrestres et de nicher à quelques mètres seulement des zones riches en poissons. Les nids étaient garnis avec des brindilles de tamarix ou situés à l'abri de branches de tamarix, ou encore placés directement dans les anciens nids de flamants (Figs. 4–6). Au total 680 nids occupés ont été recensés et l'effectif de la colonie a été estimé à 900 couples. Plusieurs stades de nidification étaient visibles : des nids avec des œufs en cours d'incubation (trois œufs majoritairement); des nids avec des œufs en



train d'éclore (œufs et poussins); des nids avec des poussins (environ 192 poussins); des gros poussins (50 individus) accompagnant les adultes. Six poussins morts ont également été trouvés. La taille moyenne de la ponte était de 1,75 œuf.

## Discussion

L'utilisation de vieux nids de flamants par des Sternes caspiennes ne semble pas avoir été décrite auparavant (Brown *et al.* 1986, Gochfeld & Burger 1996). Selon le Lieutenant Sidibé, conservateur du Parc National de la Langue de Barbarie, Sénégal (comm. pers.) les sternes n'ont pas réussi à établir leur colonie début 2006 sur les bancs de sable de l'îlot aux oiseaux à cause de l'inondation quasi quotidienne de l'îlot soumis à l'influence des marées et de la forte compétition entre les espèces nicheuses, notamment la Mouette à tête grise *Larus cirrocephalus* (3.250 couples en avril 2003), le Goéland railleur *L. genei* (1.024 couples) et la Sterne royale *Sterna maxima* (1.427 couples). (L'îlot risque à terme de disparaître à cause du canal creusé en 2003 pour protéger Saint-Louis des inondations. Ce canal coupe la Langue de Barbarie en deux et s'agrandit d'année en année.) Ceci pourrait expliquer les effectifs élevés dans l'Aftout Es Saheli, qui, à vol d'oiseau, se trouve à moins de 70 km du Parc National de la Langue de Barbarie. L'établissement des sternes dans l'Aftout indique que les conditions écologiques sont redevenues favorables. En effet, les études antérieures mentionnent l'existence de seulement 100 couples

de Sternes caspiennes dans la zone de l'Aftout (Urban *et al.* 1986). Latour (1973) n'avait trouvé qu'un couple en 1972 et 1973 dans l'embouchure du fleuve Sénégal. Cependant, le PND et sa zone périphérique, et notamment le bassin du Ntiallakh, sont confrontées à des activités de vandalisme (collecte d'œufs et de poussins de la part des populations, braconnage, etc.). Des mesures appropriées de gestion devraient être prises à court terme afin de protéger ces zones d'importance pour la nidification des oiseaux d'eau au bas delta mauritanien.

Actuellement la population nicheuse de la Sterne caspienne en l'Afrique de l'Ouest est estimée à 45.000–60.000 individus (Wetlands International 2002). Les récentes études montrent que le nombre de couples nicheurs a augmenté de façon spectaculaire dans la région durant les dernières années. En effet, si Gochfeld & Burger (1996) mentionnent que la population mondiale comptait probablement autour de 50.000 couples, dont environ 5.000 dans l'Ouest africain, il y a à peu près dix ans, Veen (2004) estime le nombre de couples à 5.000–6.000 dans le Delta du Saloum, 250 pour la Langue de Barbarie, 300 dans la Réserve de Kalissaye en Basse Casamance et 125 dans les îles Bijol en Gambie.

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### Captions to photos on opposite page

**Figure 1.** Vue générale de la colonie de Sternes caspiennes *Sterna caspia* à l'Aftout Es Saheli, Mauritanie, 20 février 2006 (Ould Sidaty)

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* colony at Aftout Es Saheli, Mauritania, 20 February 2006 (Ould Sidaty)

**Figure 2.** Anciens nids de flamants au site de nidification des Sternes caspiennes *Sterna caspia*, Aftout Es Saheli, 20 février 2006 (Ould Sidaty)

Old flamingo nests at the Caspian Tern nest site, Aftout Es Saheli, 20 February 2006 (Ould Sidaty)

**Figure 3.** Nid de Sterne caspienne *Sterna caspia* garni de brindilles mortes de tamarix, Aftout Es Saheli, 20 février 2006 (Ould Sidaty)

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* nest lined with *Tamarix* twigs, Aftout Es Saheli, 20 February 2006 (Ould Sidaty)

**Figure 4.** Poussin de Sterne caspienne *Sterna caspia* à l'abri de branches de tamarix, Aftout Es Saheli, 20 février 2006 (Ould Sidaty)

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* chick behind *Tamarix* branches, Aftout Es Saheli, 20 February 2006 (Ould Sidaty)

**Figure 5.** Poussin de Sterne caspienne *Sterna caspia* dans un ancien nid de flamant, Aftout Es Saheli, 20 février 2006 (Ould Sidaty)

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* chick in an old flamingo nest, Aftout Es Saheli, 20 February 2006 (Ould Sidaty)

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# First records for Congo-Brazzaville of Miombo Pied Barbet *Tricholaema frontata*, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* and Sladen's Barbet *Gymnobucco sladeni*

Tony King and Christelle Chamberlan

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Premières observations pour le Congo-Brazzaville du Barbican du Miombo *Tricholaema frontata*, du Barbion à front jaune *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* et du Barbican de Sladen *Gymnobucco sladeni*. En 2005–06, dans la Réserve de Lesio-Louna, 140 km au nord de Brazzaville, Congo-Brazzaville, nous avons obtenu les premières observations pour le pays du Barbican du Miombo *Tricholaema frontata*, du Barbion à front jaune *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* et du Barbican de Sladen *Gymnobucco sladeni*. Les photos et mensurations proviennent d'individus de chaque espèce pris au filet. Les observations les plus proches se situent à 85 km à l'est pour le Barbion à front jaune, 150 km au nord-est pour le Barbican de Sladen, et 750 km au sud pour le Barbican du Miombo. La présence de ce dernier est particulièrement inattendue du fait que l'espèce est presque exclusivement restreinte aux forêts claires de miombo du centre de l'Afrique australe. A Lesio-Louna, un couple a été observé à plusieurs reprises dans une savane à *Loudetia* parsemée d'arbres *Hymenocardia acida*. Ces découvertes fournissent un argument supplémentaire pour la classification de la région au sein de la zone de transition Guinéo-Congolaise/Zambézienne.

**Summary.** During field work in 2005–06 in the Lesio-Louna Reserve, 140 km north of Brazzaville, Congo-Brazzaville, we made the first country records of Miombo Pied Barbet *Tricholaema frontata*, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* and Sladen's Barbet *Gymnobucco sladeni*. Photographs and morphometrics are provided of mist-netted individuals of all three species. The nearest records are 85 km to the east for Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, 150 km to the north-east for Sladen's Barbet, and 750 km to the south for Miombo Pied Barbet. The presence of Miombo Pied Barbet is particularly unexpected, as the species is almost exclusively restricted to mature miombo woodland in south-central Africa. In Lesio-Louna, a pair was observed on several occasions in *Loudetia* grassland with scattered *Hymenocardia acida* trees. These discoveries provide further support to the classification of the area within the Guinea-Congolian/Zambeian transition zone.

**W**e present observations of three barbet species new to Congo-Brazzaville. All observations were made during 2005 and 2006 in the Lesio-Louna Reserve, 140 km north of Brazzaville, in the vicinity of Iboubikro (03°16'S 15°28'E), the base camp for the reserve management project. Covering c.50,000 ha, the reserve is contiguous with the south-west portion of the larger Lefini Faunal Reserve. The two reserves form part of the Batéké Plateau, an area of rolling savanna and patchy forest extending from south-west Gabon across central Congo and slightly into Congo-Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo) (Dowsett-Lemaire 1997, 2001). The climate of the reserve is similar to that elsewhere on the plateau, with a dry season in late May–September,

the heaviest rains in October–November and March–April, and a drier period around January–February (Moutsamboté 1994, Dowsett-Lemaire 1997, King *et al.* 2004). Altitude ranges from 325 m along the Louna River in the north-west, to 700 m atop the southern cliffs (King *et al.* 2004). The major habitat is savanna grassland (>70%), with gallery and swamp forests along watercourses, plus patches of dry forest on higher ground (Moutsamboté 1994, Dowsett-Lemaire 1997, King *et al.* 2004, Nsongola *et al.* 2006). Savanna within and outside the reserve is burned regularly by local users, perhaps 4–5 times per year in places. These fires can spread into forest patches, particularly in the late dry season.

### Miombo Pied Barbet *Tricholaema frontata*

Miombo Pied Barbet is considered endemic to south-central Africa, ranging through central Angola, southern Congo-Kinshasa, most of Zambia, south-west Tanzania and west Malaŵi (Short & Horne 2001; Fig. 1). It is almost exclusively restricted to mature miombo (*Brachystegia*) woodland (Benson & Irwin 1966, Short & Horne 2001). Lesio-Louna is c.750 km north of its nearest known locality, the Carumbo area of Angola (Dean 2000; Fig. 1).

In Lesio-Louna, the species was first observed on 5 July 2005, in *Loudezia* grassland with scattered *Hymenocardia acida* trees (Fig. 2), 2 km south-east of the Iboubikro base-camp on the Lesio river and c.300 m from a small dry forest patch known locally as Idzoua-Inkou, at an altitude of 440 m. The density of *H. acida* trees here is c.10% or less, and they reach heights of c.3–8 m. This is very different from the typical habitat of the species, mature miombo woodland, which is generally dense, tall and flat-canopied (see photos in, e.g., Benson *et al.* 1971, Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2006). However, the species has been recorded in other open habitats, including degrad-

ed woodland and clearings in Zambia (Short & Horne 1988, 2001), and patchy woods and scrub in grassy areas of Luanda, north-east Angola (Ripley & Heinrich 1966). It also occurs in *Burkea* woodland in western Zambia (Benson *et al.* 1971).

Six subsequent observations were made at the same location, between 17 September 2005 and 5 February 2006. Two individuals were observed simultaneously on 3 October 2005, although no interaction between them was observed. The birds were feeding on seeds of *H. acida* (Euphorbiaceae), and on unidentified fruits and invertebrates. A single was observed once subsequently, on 30 May 2006, c.500 m from the usual site, feeding on fruits of *Maprounea africana* (Euphorbiaceae).

One of the pair observed on 3 October 2005 was mist-netted (Figs. 4–5). It was an adult, as indicated by the red forecrown and pronounced bill-tooth (Short & Horne 1988). The wing (74 mm) and tail (45 mm) measurements are consistent with the ranges given for females by Short & Horne (2001). The mass (28 g) appears to be only the second published value for the species (Ripley

### Captions to plates on opposite page

**Figure 1.** Approximate distributions of the Guinea-Congo forest (adapted from NASA undated), and of three very closely related ‘pied’ barbets: Red-fronted Barbet *Tricholaema diademata*, Miombo Pied Barbet *T. frontata* (including the isolated observation in the Lesio-Louna Reserve, Congo-Brazzaville, newly reported here), and Acacia Pied Barbet *T. leucomelas* (after Short & Horne 2001 and this paper).

Distributions approximatives de la forêt Guinéo-Congolienne (basé sur NASA, non daté), et de trois barbicans apparentés: Barbican à diadème *Tricholaema diademata*, Barbican du Miombo *T. frontata* (comprenant l’observation isolée dans la Réserve de Lesio-Louna, Congo-Brazzaville, nouvellement rapportée ici), et Barbican pie *T. leucomelas* (d’après Short & Horne 2001 et cet article).

**Figure 2.** The *Loudezia* grassland with scattered *Hymenocardia acida* trees where the observations of *T. frontata* were made in the Lesio-Louna Reserve, Congo-Brazzaville. The tall tree in the foreground, with a dead branch with a hole in it, was regularly visited by the barbets (Tony King)

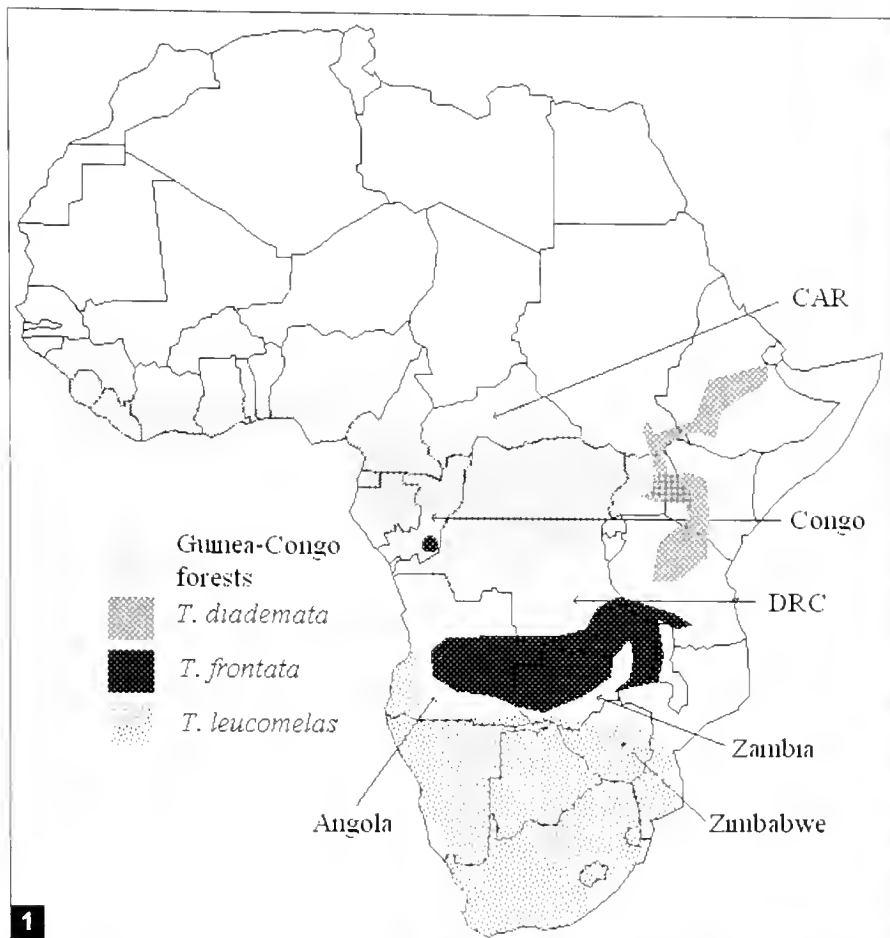
La savane à *Loudezia* avec des arbres *Hymenocardia acida* parsemés où les observations de *T. frontata* ont été faites dans la Réserve de Lesio-Louna, Congo-Brazzaville. Le grand arbre à l’avant-plan, avec une branche morte exhibant un trou, était régulièrement visité par les barbicans (Tony King)

**Figure 3.** Eight of the nine specimens of Miombo Pied Barbet *Tricholaema frontata* in The Natural History Museum, Tring, UK (Tony King © Natural History Museum, Tring)

Huit des neuf spécimens de Barbican du Miombo *Tricholaema frontata* dans la collection du British Museum à Tring, Royaume-Uni (Tony King © Natural History Museum)

**Figures 4–5.** Miombo Pied Barbet *Tricholaema frontata* mist-netted in Lesio-Louna Reserve, Congo-Brazzaville, 3 October 2005 (Christelle Chamberlan)

Barbican du Miombo *Tricholaema frontata* pris au filet dans la Réserve de Lesio-Louna, Congo-Brazzaville, 3 octobre 2005 (Christelle Chamberlan)



& Heinrich 1966 give 24.5 g for a male collected in north-east Angola, though Short & Horne 2001 give 25.5 g as the only recorded weight, also for a male). The Lesio-Louna bird was similar to the descriptions and illustrations in Short & Horne (2001, 2002), though with more extensively yellow underparts, particularly on the throat, chin and belly (Fig. 4). Most illustrations and descriptions of Miombo Pied Barbet agree that the throat is predominantly white (Chapin 1939: 'heavy black spots on the underparts, and a wash of lemon yellow across the breast'; Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1962: 'chin to chest white'; Short & Horne 2001: 'submalar area, throat and chin white with variable fine brown to black scalloping'), although others indicate a faint yellow influence (Short & Horne 1988: 'throat feathers yellowish white with or without fine black tips'; Short & Horne 2002: 'breast yellow, rest of underparts whiter'). The nine specimens at The Natural History Museum (Tring) all have predominantly white throats and bellies, with only a very slight yellow wash in some cases (Fig. 3). It appears, therefore, that the Lesio-Louna individual has underparts more strongly washed yellow than those further south. Further study is clearly required to establish if this morphological variation is of taxonomic significance.

**Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus chrysoconus*  
This widespread species of woodland and wooded grasslands ranges from the coast of West Africa, around the Guinea-Congolian forest block south-west to southern Congo-Kinshasa, Angola and northern Namibia, and south-east to north-east South Africa (Short & Horne 1988). The closest record to Lesio-Louna involved a single isolated sighting in 'savanna' at Kwamouth, Congo-Kinshasa, 85 km to the east (Schouteden 1962). There are few other records within 500 km south or south-east of Lesio-Louna (Chapin 1939, Snow 1978).

A single was mist-netted on 30 May 2006 (Fig. 10; wing: 58 mm; tail: 33 mm; mass: 10 g), in wooded *Loudetia* grassland in the same general area as the *T. frontata* observations given above, though the specific location had a more mixed selection of woody species, particularly *Hymenocardia acida*, *Syzygium guineense* var. *macrocarpum*, *Maprounea africana* and *Anonna senegalensis*. The golden forecrown, thick black forehead band and greyish flanks are characteristic of the race *P. c. extoni*, which is widespread in various wooded habitats from Tanzania to southern Africa including Angola and southern Congo-Kinshasa (Chapin 1939, Short & Horne 1988, Dean 2000).

**Table 1.** Morphometrics of six Sladen's Barbets *Gymnobucco sladeni* and one Grey-throated Barbet *G. bonapartei*, mist-netted in Lesio-Louna Reserve, Congo-Brazzaville, in 2006.

**Tableau 1.** Mensurations de six Barbican de Sladen *Gymnobucco sladeni* et un Barbican à gorge grise *G. bonapartei*, pris au filet dans la Réserve de Lesio-Louna, Congo-Brazzaville, en 2006.

	Date	Wing (mm)	Tail (mm)	Mass (g)	
Sladen's Barbet <i>Gymnobucco sladeni</i>	18/08/06	85	50	45	Red eyes, bright nasal tufts, crown bare
	04/11/06	87	49	47	
	04/11/06	87	47	48	
	06/11/06	88	51	47	
	06/11/06	87	50	46	
Mean		86.8	49.4	46.6	
	04/11/06	86	47	42	Brown eyes, dull nasal tufts, crown slightly feathered
Grey-throated Barbet <i>G. bonapartei</i>	07/10/06	83	46	45	

\* Wing-length was measured to the nearest mm, using a wing-rule and flattening the primaries gently against the rule (following Svensson 1992). Tail-length was measured with the reverse side of the wing-rule, to the base of the tail-feathers above the undertail-coverts. Mass was measured to the nearest g using spring balances.

### Sladen's Barbet *Gymnobucco sladeni*

Sladen's Barbet is a social, forest-dwelling barbet, which forms a superspecies with Bristle-nosed Barbet *G. peli* (Short & Horne 1988). Its habits are poorly known, and the species is generally considered uncommon or rare (Short & Horne 2002), being near-endemic to Congo-Kinshasa, with one record from the Central African Republic (Germain & Cornet 1994). The closest records to Lesio-Louna are from Bokalakala and Kunungu, 150 km to the north-east in Congo-Kinshasa, near Bolobo on the Congo River (Schouteden 1962).

Small vocal parties of c.5–15 Sladen's Barbets were regularly observed in June–December 2006, in gallery forest along the Lesio River, near Iboubikro base-camp, feeding on fruits and seeds of various species including *Canthium* sp., *Uapaca* sp., *Vitex* sp. and *Dioscorea* sp. Once, on 4 November, a large foraging group of c.30 was observed and a nesting colony was located in the same area in October, in a standing dead tree which had lost its crown, forming a large open forest gap (Figs. 8–9). Activity at the colony decreased from November. An adult was mist-netted and photographed on 18 August (Fig. 6), and appeared to have an active brood patch. Another five were trapped in November (Table 1), including a slightly smaller individual with brown (not red) irides, dull (not bright) nasal tufts and a lightly feathered (not naked) crown, therefore probably an immature/juvenile. The weights given in Table 1 appear to be the first published for the species (Short & Horne 2001). The species had probably previously been overlooked in Lesio-Louna, perhaps due to confusion with the sympatric Grey-throated Barbet *G. bonapartei* (Fig. 7, Table 1), although the possibility that the species is expanding its range cannot be eliminated.

### Discussion

Lesio-Louna Reserve is situated on the Batéké Plateau, an area of undulating grasslands with limited forest cover, nestled within the general range of the large Congolian rainforest block (Fig. 1). The discovery of Miombo Pied Barbet, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird and Sladen's Barbet illustrates that the area supports a diverse barbet fauna. Nine species have now been recorded in an area of just 1.5 km<sup>2</sup> at the heart of the reserve, including five species of *Pogoniulus* (*P. scolopaceus*, *P. atroflavus*, *P.*

*subsulphureus*, *P. bilineatus* and *P. chrysoconus*), two *Gymnobucco* (*G. bonapartei* and *G. sladeni*) and two *Tricholaema* (*T. frontata* and *T. hirsuta*).

This diversity may be attributed to that of the forest and grassland-woodland habitats in the area, which support elements of the Guinea-Congo forest biome and Zambezian biome avifaunas (Fishpool & Evans 2001). Certain near-endemics of the Zambezian biome have previously been identified on the Batéké Plateau, such as Sousa's Shrike *Lanius souzae* and Tinkling Cisticola *Cisticola rufilatus*, prompting Dowsett-Lemaire (2001) to categorise the plateau as part of the Guinea-Congolian/Zambezian transition zone of White (1983). The discovery of Miombo Pied Barbet in Lesio-Louna provides further evidence to support this view. Its apparent isolation from the core population of the species is similar to that of several other woodland species observed in the same area, such as Yellow-bellied Hyliota *Hyliota flavigaster* and Piping Cisticola *Cisticola fulvicapillus*. Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, on the other hand, appears not to represent an isolated population, but rather that the Batéké Plateau probably constitutes the northern limit of a continuous distribution from the extensive south-central African woodlands. In contrast to the other two barbets, Sladen's Barbet is restricted to the Guinea-Congo forest biome, and is a near-endemic to Congo-Kinshasa, only reaching the Batéké Plateau in its limited gallery forests. Despite these recent discoveries, the avifauna of the area is little known, and further exploration throughout the plateau is encouraged.

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Figure 6. Sladen's Barbet *Gymnobucco sladeni* mist-netted in Lesio-Louna Reserve, Congo-Kinshasa, 18 August 2006 (Tony King)

Barbican de Sladen *Gymnobucco sladeni* pris au filet dans la Réserve de Lesio-Louna, Congo-Brazzaville, 18 août 2006 (Tony King)

Figure 7. Grey-throated Barbet *Gymnobucco bonapartei* mist-netted in Lesio-Louna Reserve, Congo-Brazzaville, 7 October 2006 (Christelle Chamberlan)

Barbican à gorge grise *Gymnobucco bonapartei* pris au filet dans la Réserve de Lesio-Louna, Congo-Brazzaville, 7 octobre 2006 (Christelle Chamberlan)

Figures 8–9. Sladen's Barbet *Gymnobucco sladeni* colony in a dead tree within gallery forest, Lesio-Louna Reserve, Congo-Brazzaville, November 2006 (Tony King)

Colonie de Barbicans de Sladen *Gymnobucco sladeni* dans un arbre mort en galerie forestière, Réserve de Lesio-Louna, Congo-Brazzaville, novembre 2006 (Tony King)

Figure 10. Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* mist-netted in Lesio-Louna Reserve, Congo-Brazzaville, 30 May 2006 (Tony King)

Petit Barbu à front jaune *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* pris au filet dans la Réserve de Lesio-Louna, Congo-Brazzaville, 30 mai 2006 (Tony King)



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# First record of Golden-naped Weaver *Ploceus aureonucha* in Uganda

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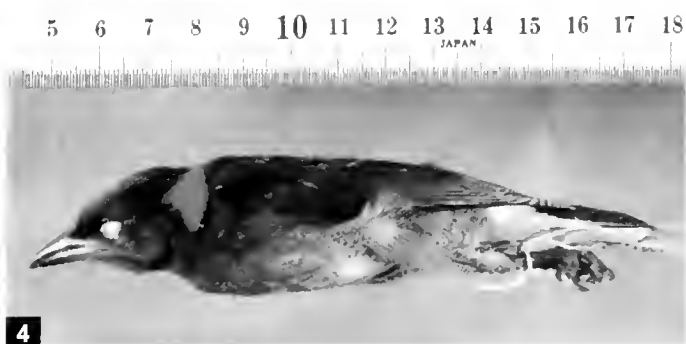
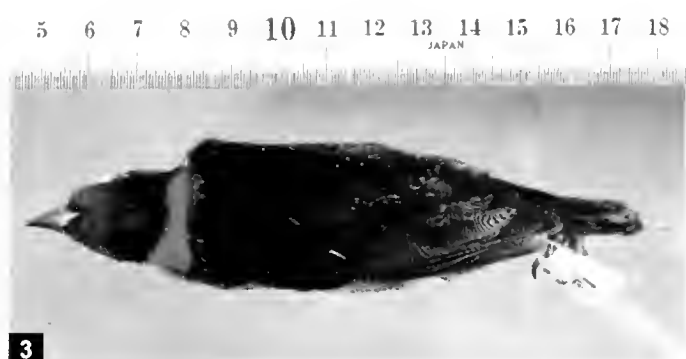
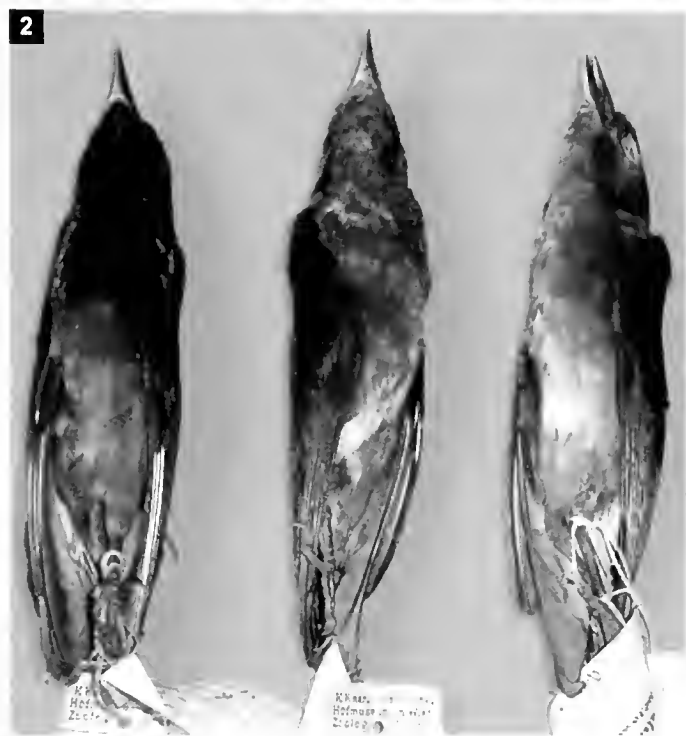
**Première mention du Tisserin à nuque d'or *Ploceus aureonucha* pour l'Ouganda.** Un couple de Tisserins à nuque d'or *Ploceus aureonucha* a été observé dans le Parc National de Semliki, Ouganda, le 1 août 2007. L'espèce, qui est considérée comme menacée d'extinction, n'était connue que d'une petite partie de la Forêt de l'Ituri, au Congo-Kinshasa. L'observation rapportée ici étend son aire de distribution de 80 km à l'est.

On 1 August 2006, we observed two Golden-naped Weavers *Ploceus aureonucha* in Semliki National Park, Uganda. We arrived at the head of the Kirumia trail at 07.00 hrs and proceeded north through lowland forest towards the Semliki River. After c.4 km, when we passed the first oxbow lake, we stopped at 11.30 hrs (00°49'N 30°05'S; 729 m). The forest was fairly quiet when we heard bird calls from mid levels and found a pair of Crested Malimbos *Malimbus malimbicus*, then spotted two mostly dark-plumaged forest weavers high in the canopy of a large (30 m) Uganda ironwood *Cynometra alexandri* tree. The weavers were on the move, perching for short periods, occasionally gleaning insects on canopy branches of the tree. When one bird fed on the side of a branch in the manner of an arboreal nuthatch, we had views of the pale mantle, yellow onto the back; it also had a dark rusty-brown crown and nape. The other bird lacked yellow on the back but had a greyish-yellow forehead or crown and golden-yellow nape. In both birds, which were perhaps a pair, the eyes and feet were dark, the wings blackish, the underparts either blackish or grey on the throat and breast, and paler grey to whitish on the belly and undertail-coverts. We watched the birds for c.5–7 minutes, through the leaves and the diffuse light of the forest into an overcast grey sky. At the same site two days later we did not see the birds again.

Our first impression, based on the birds' feeding behaviour, was of Yellow-mantled Weaver *Ploceus tricolor*, but the Semliki weavers were paler on the crown; or Brown-capped Weaver *P. insignis* or Preuss's Weaver *P. preussi*, which are bright yellow on the crown; but unlike these, the Semliki weavers were blackish and grey on the underparts (and black on the rump, unlike *C. preussi*). We found no good match amongst the East African weavers (Stevenson & Fanshawe 2002), but the illustration in Sinclair & Ryan (2000), although

dark, suggested the Central African *P. aureonucha*. Subsequently, in the library, we recognised the Semliki birds as *P. aureonucha* of the Ituri Forest region of Congo, from the illustration in Chapin (1954) and the description and illustration in *The Birds of Africa* (Craig 2004).

However, it was only upon examining photographs of *P. aureonucha* specimens in the collections of the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), the Naturhistorische Museum Wien (NMW) and Stockholm Natural History Museum (NRM), that we became sure of the identification. The AMNH specimens are an adult male and two immature males (following Chapin 1954). The adult male (AMNH 264278) is rusty brown on the top of the head, bright rufous to golden on the nape and bright yellow on the back, black on the throat and rusty brown on the breast, and grey to white on the breast and undertail-coverts. The other two had unenlarged testes. One (AMNH 264279), in moult from immature to adult plumage, is dull yellowish on the forehead and crown, dark from the face (rufous-black) through a band across the back of the head, golden-yellow on the nape and black on the back; the underparts are mixed pale grey and black on the throat, mixed grey and rusty brown on the breast, and grey on the belly and undertail-coverts; it is marked 's.n.q.f.o.' (skull not quite fully ossified). The other (AMNH 264280) has a mixed black and dull yellow crown and a yellow nape, the back is black, and the underparts unmarked grey from the throat to belly. One of the three NMW specimens in the type series, taken in 1910 by Grauer (Figs. 1–2), is a female (NMW 4584); it has the forehead and forecrown dull yellow, like the rest of the crown black and the nape golden-yellow, like AMNH 264279. NMW 4583 is an adult male, the plumage is like AMNH 264278. NMW 4585



is similar to NMW 5484 and AMNH 264279 but has some yellow on the back. The adult male *P. aureonucha* is similar to the male illustration in Fry & Keith (2004), and the immature males are similar to the female Golden-naped Weaver in that book, and to NMW 4584. Finally, the immature female taken by Gyldenstolpe in 1921 (NRM 601271; illustrated in Gyldenstolpe 1924) has the forehead dark yellowish, the crown black and the nape golden-yellow (Figs. 3–4). The Semliki weavers were clearly *P. aureonucha* by their yellowish forehead or crown and yellow nape, and in one bird by the yellow back. Craig (2005) suggested that *P. aureonucha* may represent previously unrecognised, subadult, plumages of Yellow-mantled Weaver *Ploceus tricolor*; however, his measurements reveal *P. aureonucha* to be smaller than *P. tricolor*. Further observations on these weavers are needed.

Golden-naped Weaver is known only from the Ituri Forest in eastern Congo-Kinshasa, where it was discovered in 1910 (Sassi 1920). Beside the three birds collected in 1910, the type series in NMW, four other specimens have been taken: one in 1921 (now in the Stockholm museum; a few others were seen) and the three AMNH birds in 1926 (including two from a flock of 20–25 birds) (Chapin 1954, Collar & Stuart 1985, Collar *et al.* 1994, BirdLife International 2000, Craig 2005). The weaver went unrecorded for the next 60 years,

Figures 1–2. Type series of Golden-naped Weaver *Ploceus aureonucha* Sassi, 1920, in the Naturhistorisches Museum Wien, Austria. Left to right, dorsal and ventral: adult male NMW 4583, adult female NMW 4584, moulting male NMW 4585 (E. Bauernfeind)

Série type du Tisserin à nuque d'or *Ploceus aureonucha* Sassi, 1920, dans le Naturhistorische Museum Wien, Autriche. De gauche à droite, vues dorsales et ventrales: mâle adulte NMW 4583, femelle adulte NMW 4584, mâle en mue NMW 4585 (E. Bauernfeind)

Figures 3–4. Immature female Golden-naped Weaver *Ploceus aureonucha* (NRM 601271), taken at Campi ya Wambuti, west of Irumu, Congo-Kinshasa, on 11 June 1921, and held in the Naturhistoriska Riksmuseet, Stockholm (Göran Frisk)

Tisserin à nuque d'or *Ploceus aureonucha* (NRM 601271), femelle immature collecté à Campi ya Wambuti, à l'ouest de Irumu, Congo-Kinshasa, le 11 juin 1921, et détenu par le Naturhistoriska Riksmuseet, Stockholm (Göran Frisk)

until 1986, when it was observed several times, once in a flock of up to 60 weavers at Epulu, followed by a record in 1994 of a pair with young at the same locality (Collar *et al.* 1994, Craig 2005). The record reported here is the first outside Congo-Kinshasa and extends the known range 80 km east.

Acknowledgements

We thank Peter Capainolo at the American Museum of Natural History, for photographs of the Golden-naped Weaver specimens collected by Chapin, Göran Frisk at the Stockholm museum for photographs of Gyldenstolpe's bird and Ernst Baurenfeind at the Naturhistorisches Museum Wien for photographs and comments on the type series collected by Grauer; Andrew Plumptre for assistance to MW, permitting him to use the library at the Wildlife Conservation Society office in Kampala; and Tropical Birding for arrangements for our trip to Uganda. Adrian Craig discussed his observations of *Ploceus* species, and Ron Demey and Guy Kirwan offered suggestions on the manuscript.

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# First record of Eurasian Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus* for Senegal

Adriano Talamelli

**Première mention du Vautour moine *Aegypius monachus* pour le Sénégal.** Le 13 février 2007, un Vautour moine *Aegypius monachus* a été observé et photographié à Nianing, 10 km au sud de Mbour, Sénégal (14°20'N 16°57'W). L'oiseau était en train de se nourrir d'un cadavre d'âne en compagnie d'autres vautours. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour le Sénégal et la deuxième pour l'Afrique sub-saharienne, la première étant celle concernant un individu bague en Espagne en novembre 1994 et retrouvé mort dans la région de Sikasso, au Mali, le 19 janvier 1995.

On 13 February 2007, I noticed a group of vultures feeding on the carcasses of two donkeys near the main road at Nianing, c. 10 km south of Mbour, Senegal (14°20'N 16°57'W). The group comprised 20 Rüppell's Griffon Vultures *Gyps rueppellii*, single African White-backed *G. africanus*, Eurasian Griffon *G. fulvus* and Lappet-faced Vultures *Torgos tracheliotus*, as well as three Hooded Vultures *Necrosyrtes monachus* and another, very large, vulture which was obvious for its uniformly blackish-brown plumage. The head was black. The bill was heavy, with a pale bluish-grey base and cere, and a large black tip; the feet were whitish-pink.

I immediately identified it as a Eurasian Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus*, a species I had seen before in Spain. I observed it from the car at a distance of c. 5–10 m and was able to acquire some photographs (Figs. 1–2). The blackish plumage and all-dark head are indicative of a young bird. Juvenile characters are retained for c. 2 years after which the plumage becomes browner and the head paler (Forsman 1999). The bird was therefore probably a first-winter (second calendar-year).

Eurasian Black Vulture is a Palearctic and, very marginally, Indo-Malayan species (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001). The nearest breeding population is in Spain where, due to conservation measures, the species has recovered from c. 200 pairs in the 1970s to c. 1,050–1,150 pairs by the end of the 20th century (BirdLife International 2000, 2004). Though largely sedentary, young birds do undertake dispersive movements. In north-west Africa, Eurasian Black Vulture is an accidental visitor to Morocco, mostly to the north; all birds are thought to be of Spanish origin (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). There are a few recent records in Algeria and one in Tunisia (Isenmann *et al.* 2005,

Isenmann & Moali 2000). The species is not mentioned for Senegambia (Barlow *et al.* 1997) or for West Africa (Borrow & Demey 2001, 2004), but there is a recent recovery in Mali of a bird ringed in Spain in November 1994 and found dead, presumably shot, on 18 January 1995 at Sola Bougouda, Sikasso (11°18'N 05°38'W: Cantos & Gómez-Manzanque 1996). This appears to constitute the first documented sub-Saharan record, as an old claim from Sudan probably referred to Lappet-faced Vulture (Nikolaus 1987).

The record reported here is thus the first of Eurasian Black Vulture for Senegal and the second for sub-Saharan Africa. It seems probable that the bird joined Eurasian Griffon Vultures which, following their dramatic increase in Spain in the last 15 years, have become regular winter visitors to Senegambia (Barlow *et al.* 1997).

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I thank Ron Demey for assisting me in writing this note, Ricard Gutiérrez for providing details of the Mali record, and Nik Borrow and Dick Forsman for their comments on a draft.

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**Figures 1–2.** Eurasian Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus* with Rüppell's Griffon *Gyps rueppelli*, Eurasian Griffon *G. fulvus*, African White-headed *G. africanus*, Lappet-faced *Torgos tracheliotus* and Hooded Vultures *Necrosyrtes monachus*, Nianing, Senegal, 13 February 2007 (Adriano Talamelli)

Vautour moine *Aegypius monachus* en compagnie de cinq autres espèces de vautours (Vautour de Rüppell *Gyps rueppelli*, Vautour fauve *G. fulvus*, Vautour africain *G. africanus*, Vautour oricou *Torgos tracheliotus* et Vautour charognard *Necrosyrtes monachus*), Nianing, Sénégal, 13 février 2007 (Adriano Talamelli)

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# First record of Little Crake *Porzana parva* for Seychelles

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Première mention de la Marouette poussin *Porzana parva* pour les Seychelles. Une Marouette poussin *Porzana parva* immature était présente à Cousin, Seychelles, du 25 au 27 décembre 2004. Cette mention a été acceptée comme la première pour le pays par le Comité d'Homologation Seychellois.

On 25 December 2004 we noted a tiny rail in the small marsh on Cousin Island Nature Reserve. It was feeding frantically and paid little attention to our presence. Though repeatedly chased to the edge of the marsh by Common Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus*, it kept returning to forage in the centre. The marsh contained a few centimetres of rainwater and thus constituted suitable foraging habitat. Having watched the crake through binoculars for some time, we returned to the field station to get a camera, which permitted us to take photographs (Figs. 1–2). The bird remained in the marsh several days, repeatedly allowing good views but becoming a little shyer each time we looked for it. Three days after we found the bird, heavy rains hit Cousin Island, increasing the amount of water in the marsh. The deeper water probably made the habitat less suitable for the crake and we did not see it again. Photographs and a description were submitted to the Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC).

## Description

A tiny crake with dull-brown upperparts and wings marked with short blackish stripes. Long primary projection in folded wing (c.8 primary tips visible). Supercilium pale grey, extending from bill to behind eye, contrasting with brown crown and buff spot behind eye. Underparts pale grey with flanks and undertail slightly barred whitish. Iris red-brown. Short bill and long legs greenish.

The long primary projection and slight barring on the rear underparts identified the bird as a Little Crake *Porzana parva*. Baillon's Crake *P. pusilla*, with which confusion is most likely, has a short primary projection with rarely more than three primary tips visible, and obvious black-and-white barring on the flanks extending in front of the legs (Cramp & Simmons 1980, Taylor 1998). The red-brown iris is indicative of a first-winter, the irides being scarlet in adults. The absence of red at the base of the bill may have been due to malnutrition



Figures 1–2. Little Crake / Marouette poussin *Porzana parva*, Cousin Island, Seychelles, December 2004 (Cas Eikenaar)

or because this feature had not yet developed (juveniles lack red: Cramp & Simmons 1980, Taylor & van Perlo 1998).

**Status and distribution**

Little Crane breeds in southern and central Europe east to Kazakhstan and north-west China; its imperfectly known winter range includes the Mediterranean basin, sub-Saharan Africa (mainly in the east, south to Zambia) and Arabia to north-west India. Vagrants have been found on some remote islands, e.g. the Azores, Madeira and the Canaries (Cramp & Simmons 1980, Urban *et al.* 1986, Taylor 1996, Taylor & van Perlo 1998). Prior to our record, which has been accepted by the SBRC as the first for Seychelles, the species had never been recorded in the Indian Ocean islands.

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# First record of Common Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* for São Tomé and Príncipe

Michael S. L. Mills<sup>a</sup>, John Caddick<sup>b</sup>, Ron Hoff<sup>c</sup>, Dollyann Myers<sup>c</sup> and Izak Coetzer<sup>d</sup>

Première mention de l'Hirondelle de rivage *Riparia riparia* pour São Tomé et Príncipe. Une Hirondelle de rivage *Riparia riparia* a été observée le 28 septembre 2006 le long du Rio Papagaio, aux abords de Santo António, Príncipe. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour le pays de ce migrateur paléarctique.

Common Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* is a scarce Palearctic migrant in west-central Africa, with only a handful of records from southern Cameroon, Gabon, western Congo-Kinshasa and Angola (Keith *et al.* 1992). A recent revision of the avifauna of São Tomé and Príncipe lists only four Hirundinidae: Banded Martin *Riparia cincta* (not recorded in the last 100 years), Grey-rumped Swallow *Pseudhirundo griseopyga* (unconfirmed), Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* (reported to be regular) and Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum* (known from two records, both on Príncipe) (Jones & Tye 2006).

On 28 September 2006 we observed a single Common Sand Martin patrolling the Rio Papagaio on the outskirts of Santo António, Príncipe. It was distinguished from Brown-throated Martin *R. paludicola* by having a white throat bordered ventrally by a distinct brown bar across the upper breast, and from Banded Martin by its small size, more flitting flight and lack of a white eyebrow (Borrow & Demey 2001). Given Príncipe's relatively close proximity to the African mainland (*c.* 220 km) this record, the first for the country, is perhaps not entirely unexpected.

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Photospot:  
Hybrids between African and Green-breasted Pittas  
*Pitta angolensis* ssp. and *P. (angolensis) reichenowi*

Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire and Robert J. Dowsett

Hybrides entre les Brèves d'Angola *Pitta angolensis* ssp. et à poitrine verte *P. (angolensis) reichenowi*. Les photos reproduites ici montrent deux hybrides apparents entre les Brèves d'Angola *Pitta angolensis* ssp. et à poitrine verte *P. (angolensis) reichenowi*, ce qui soulève une fois de plus la question de leur conspécificité.

The two photographs presented here (Figs. 2–3), previously published, respectively, on the back cover of *Bull. ABC* of March 2004 and in the last issue (14: 95), are reproduced again in direct comparison as both birds exhibit some interesting plumage features. Indeed, although both were originally labelled, without comment, as ‘African *Pitta angolensis*’, they appear to be hybrids between *P. angolensis* and Green-breasted *Pitta P. (angolensis) reichenowi*. Both are clearly adults, given their red belly. Their breast, however, is not wholly yellow-buff as in typical *P. angolensis*. In the bird from Nigeria (Fig. 2) the breast is mainly yellow-buff with an olive-green wash from the upper breast to the centre; in the Congolese bird (Fig. 3) the dominant colour is green, with perhaps a yellow wash down the middle. The Nigerian bird has a rather distinct dark patch, separating the throat from the breast, which is found only in *P. (a.) reichenowi* (Chapin 1953, Borrow & Demey 2001): it is either very indistinct or absent in the bird from Congo-Kinshasa. On the other

hand, both have the pinkish throat (as opposed to white) characteristic of *P. angolensis*.

The presumed locality of the Congolese bird, Basankusu (01°13'N 19°49'E), is rather unexpected, as this is well inside the range of *P. (a.) reichenowi* (Fig. 1). There are, however, too few specimens of pittas from northern Congo-Kinshasa to delimit the ranges of the taxa concerned with real accuracy. These two photographs are additional to seven museum specimens of hybrids: two from Brazzaville (Congo-Brazzaville), and five from Cameroon (see Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2004). As *P. angolensis* is at least partially migratory, some individuals could perhaps migrate to the middle Congo and hybridise with the local *P. (a.) reichenowi*. In any case, there is little doubt that the two taxa are very closely related and the number of hybrids, or birds with intermediate plumage, tends to support the views of those authors who treat them as conspecific (for a more detailed discussion, see Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2004).

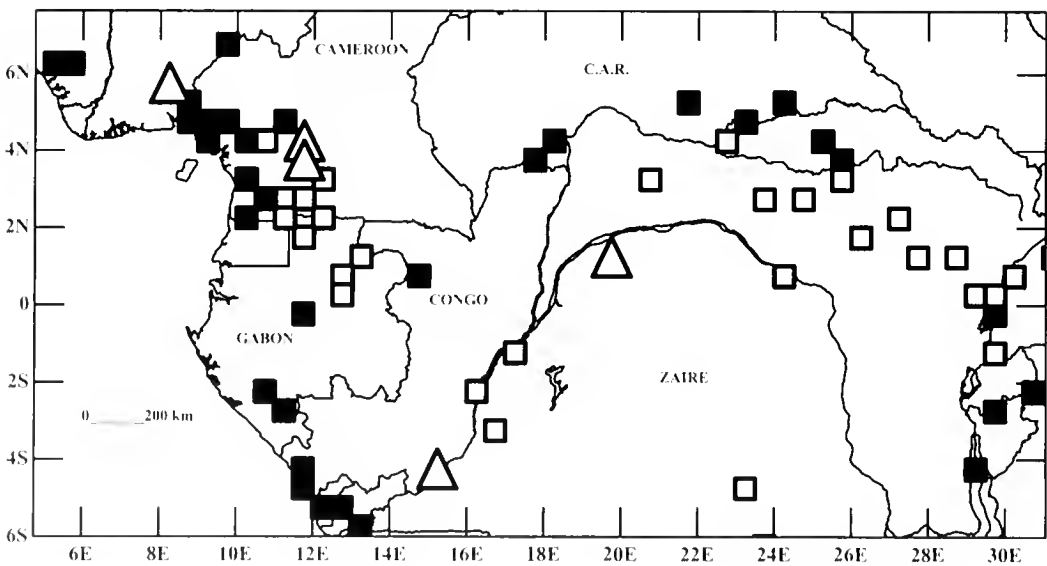
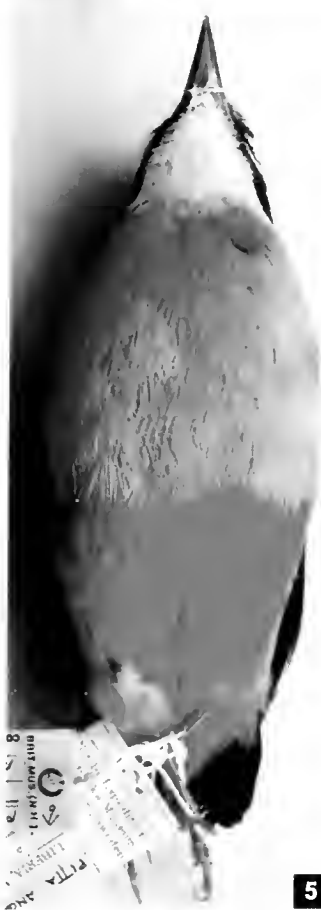


Figure 1. Map of distribution (30' squares) in central Africa of African *Pitta angolensis* (solid squares) and Green-breasted *Pitta P. (a.) reichenowi* (hollow squares), triangles showing locations of hybrid specimens.  
Carte de distribution (carrés de 30') en Afrique centrale de la Brève d'Angola *Pitta angolensis* (carrés pleins) et de la Brève à poitrine verte *P. (a.) reichenowi* (carrés creux), les triangles indiquant les localités d'où proviennent des spécimens hybrides.



Figures 2–3. Pittas showing intermediate plumage characters between African Pitta *Pitta angolensis* ssp. and Green-breasted Pitta *P. (a.) reichenowi*, 1 from Cross River National Park in south-east Nigeria (Guus Hak), and 2 from Basankusu, central Congo-Kinshasa (Filip Verbelen)

Brèves arborant un plumage intermédiaire entre celui de la Brève d'Angola *Pitta angolensis* ssp. et la Brève à poitrine verte *P. (a.) reichenowi*, 1 provenant du Cross River National Park, Nigeria du sud-est (Guus Hak), et 2 de Basankusu, au centre du Congo-Kinshasa (Filip Verbelen)

Figure 4. Green-breasted Pitta / Brève à poitrine verte *Pitta (angolensis) reichenowi*, Bitye, Cameroon, 17 September 1910 (Guy M. Kirwan © The Natural History Museum, Tring)

Figure 5. African Pitta / Brève d'Angola *Pitta angolensis*, Mzimba district, Nyasaland, 4 December 1937 (Guy M. Kirwan © The Natural History Museum, Tring)

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# Birding northern Kenya: in search of Masked Lark

## *Spizocorys personata*

Kevin Vang and Wojciech Dabrowka

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**Observer les oiseaux au nord du Kenya:** à la recherche de l'Alouette masquée *Spizocorys personata*. Le nord du Kenya est actuellement peu fréquenté par les ornithologues. En mars–avril 2005 les auteurs y ont visité certaines zones, notamment le Parc national de Marsabit et le désert de Dida Galgalu, ainsi que le Lac Turkana et le désert de Horr avoisinant. Ils y ont recherché et photographié l'Alouette masquée *Spizocorys personata* et d'autres espèces et sous-espèces du désert.

**D**uring March–April 2005 we took the opportunity, whilst working in Kenya, to visit parts of north-central Kenya to look for and photograph Masked Lark *Spizocorys personata* and other desert species and subspecies. We also planned to undertake more general bird photography in the region, including in Marsabit National Park and the Dida Galgalu desert, as well as Lake Turkana and the adjacent Horr desert. Our plan was developed following discussions with many Kenyan bird and wildlife experts. We concluded that the far north of Kenya had been under-explored in recent times, largely because of the banditry and civil unrest in the border areas with Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan, and as such was worthy of visiting.

### Planning

We timed our expedition to coincide with the annual meeting in Nairobi of the regional African development programme that we manage at the Australian Foundation in Sydney. We worked closely with our foundation counterpart, Concern Universal Kenya, who provided information concerning the area and helped us procure a sturdy jeep to undertake the venture. Unfortunately we were unable to find many people who had visited the area in recent years and several others assured us that the area was far too dangerous and that, in any case, local authorities would prevent us from entering. The net result was that we just decided to head north and 'play it by ear' as we went.

We decided not to use a driver as the techniques that we use for vehicular bird photography are quite specialised, and it is too time-consuming to train local drivers to understand or utilise them effectively. Furthermore, they necessitate travelling at very low speeds, of 20–30 km/h maximum, which most local drivers find very difficult. We

also decided to use guides only as and when the need arose.

Other than a good GPS and our optical and photographic equipment, we did not carry any other specialised gear. We bought cheap mattresses, sheets, tarpaulins and lots of water, but with little chance of major rainfall, we did not elect to carry a tent. We also had a very detailed map of northern Kenya.

### Security and logistics

Travelling in northern Kenya is a calculated risk that should be approached carefully and preferably not alone. It is a rugged destination that demands complete self-sufficiency and some expedition experience. Such a trip requires a 4×4 vehicle with high ground clearance. Ideally, don't use a newer model or vehicle that is in particularly good condition, as the fancier it is, the more it will be coveted. Ensure that you have a good GPS and map as there are no road signs. Also ensure that you carry plenty of extra fuel. Yellow cooking oil barrels are cheap and easy to use, but ensure they are secured firmly and check them frequently for leaks. Always carry two spare tyres. Night drives should not be contemplated. Some nights we were caught out, given our slow speeds, but ideally you should be in or close to your hotel or at your campsite before sunset.

If sleeping out, always camp c.1–2 km from the main road, well out of sight of any passing traffic and always make sure that you erase your tracks where you turn off, so it is not readily evident that a vehicle has left the track. This is particularly important in sandy or muddy areas. In the rocky Dida Galgalu, such precautions are not really necessary as your tracks are not readily visible. Choose a campsite by looking for evidence of wildlife and lack of signs of human or domestic



animal activity. Sites with lots of duikers and no sign of domestic animals reduce your chances of being found. The importance of security in northern Kenya should not be under-estimated. In early 2006, almost 80 people were killed in Turbi when they were attacked by rebels from Ethiopia.

That said, we did not encounter many people in the desert. Occasionally we would pass large transport trucks full of people and goods, usually travelling from Moyale on the Ethiopian border south to Marsabit and beyond. We often left the jeep parked in the bush and wandered off. Occasionally when we returned a nomad with a small herd of goats or sheep would be resting in the shade of the jeep. Carry bottles of water to give to people that you meet in remote areas, as in this area of Kenya it helps you to make friends quickly. Once you hand out water, the people often seem content to leave you to your birdwatching rather than hassling you.

It is worth driving slowly. Not only will you see many more birds by so doing, but you will also save your tyres and your jeep generally. Desert birds are often quite lethargic due to the heat and shelter under bushes and rocks. They are easily flushed when approached on foot, causing them unnecessary stress, but if approached slowly in a vehicle they generally permit photography without being disturbed.

## Birding sites

### Isiolo to Marsabit (274 km)

The Ewaso Ngiro River marks the border of Eastern and Rift Valley Provinces and offers good birding along the valley. The rolling scrub forest north of the river is home to **Vulturine Guineafowl** *Acryllium vulturinum*, **Buff-crested Bustard** *Eupodotis gindiana*, **White-bellied Go-away Bird** *Corythaixoides leucogaster* and **Von der Decken's Hornbill** *Tockus deckeni*. Crossing back into Eastern Province, we also visited Losai National Reserve where we quickly found **Somali Ostrich** *Struthio camelus molybdophanes*, **Yellow-necked Spurfowl** *Francolinus leucoscepus*, **Crested Francolin** *Francolinus sephaena grantii* and **Fischer's Starling** *Spreo fischeri*.

### Marsabit National Park

Encompassing altitudes from 502 to 1,344 m, Marsabit National Park protects a range of habitats from the rolling hills and upland forests of the

Marsabit Mountains, through a transitional area of upland grasslands and open forest, to *Acacia* scrub and rocky deserts at lower, more arid elevations. The uplands contain numerous natural and artificial waterholes.

We stayed in Marsabit at a local Muslim-owned hotel, the Jey Jey Centre, set around a pleasant courtyard with a small restaurant attached. The rooms are clean and some have private baths but most have shared facilities. The electricity and water pressure are, however, somewhat sporadic.

We spent two days exploring the northern and southern sectors of the national park. The hills above 1,000 m were densely forested. Moisture is gained from nightly fogs which envelop the higher areas each evening, permitting the presence of a completely separate suite of forest bird species from the surrounding lower elevation desert and open scrub. Forest residents in the highlands of

## Captions to plates on pages 212–213

(all photographs taken in northern Kenya, March–April 2005, by Kevin Vang and Wojciech Dabrowka)

**Figure 1.** Donaldson-Smith's Sparrow Weaver / Mahali de Donaldson *Plocepasser donaldsoni*

**Figure 2.** Somali Bee-eater / Guépier de Révoil *Merops revoilii*

**Figure 3.** Masked Lark / Alouette masquée *Spizocorys personata*

**Figure 4.** Masked Lark *Spizocorys personata* and female Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus*

Alouette masquée *Spizocorys personata* et Ganga à ventre brun *Pterocles exustus* femelle

**Figure 5.** Chestnut-headed Sparrow Lark / Moinelette d'Oustalet *Eremopterix signatus*

**Figure 6.** Greater Kestrel / Crécerelle aux yeux blancs *Falco rupicoloides*

**Figure 7.** White-headed Buffalo Weaver / Alecto à tête blanche *Dinemellia dinemelli*

**Figure 8.** Vulturine Guineafowl / Pintade vulturine *Acryllium vulturinum*

**Figure 9.** Kori Bustard / Outarde kori *Ardeotis kori*

**Figure 10.** White-bellied Go-away Bird / Touraco à ventre blanc *Corythaixoides leucogaster*

**Figure 11.** Fischer's Starling / Spréo de Fischer *Spreo fischeri*

**Figure 12.** Yellow-necked Spurfowl / Francolin à cou jaune *Francolinus leucoscepus*





the park include **Mountain Olive Thrush** *Turdus olivaceus abyssinicus*, **African Dusky Flycatcher** *Muscicapa adusta marsabit* and **Grey Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina caesia pura*. Given that the hill forests of Marsabit and other northern Kenyan montane outliers are surrounded by vast tracts of desert, it is relatively unsurprising that the forest birds encountered here are frequently represented by distinct subspecies.

Being late March, migrants such as **Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus acredula*, **Eurasian Roller** *Coracias garrulus*, **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* and **Isabelline Wheatear** *O. isabellina* were frequently encountered. The north of the park is mainly scrub and open desert, providing excellent opportunities to photograph species such as **Buff-crested Bustard** *Eupodotis gindiana*, **White-throated Bee-eater** *Merops albicollis*, **Red-fronted Warbler** *Urorhipis rufifrons*, **Donaldson-Smith's Sparrow Weaver** *Plocepasser donaldsoni*, **White-crowned Starling** *Spreo albicapillus horrensis* and the *argentea* subspecies of **Croaking Cisticola** *Cisticola natalensis*.

### *Dida Galgalu desert*

Didi Galgalu desert lies between 500 and 750 m and is an arid rocky plain with large areas of low-lying, black basalt rubble interspersed with sandy desert areas including active low dunes. Some expanses are bare, but others, both rocky and sandy, were grass-covered as a result of recent thunderstorms. Although largely dry during our visit, small streams within the sandy valleys support open forest which offers shade for an array of desert species. Isolated patches of dense thorny, low *Acacia* thicket occur widely and provide further shelter.

After leaving Marsabit, we drove north into the desert to look for one of our main target species, **Masked Lark** *Spizocorys personata yavelloensis*. A migrating **Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus* disturbed a large group of **Chestnut-headed Sparrow Larks** *Eremopterix signatus*, **Masked Larks** and **Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles exustus olivascens*, which had all been seeking the shade of basalt boulders. **Somali Bee-eater** *Merops revoilii*, **Somali Courser** *Cursorius somalensis littoralis* and **Somali Fiscal** *Lanius somalicus* were increasingly common as we proceeded north into the desert.

The following day, **Masked Larks** were found in the same area, a long stretch of flat black basalt ventifacts beside the main road at 02°37'N 38°03'E. They appeared to be confined to an area of a few kilometres, with none seen north or south of this area. Where recent thundershowers had yielded their rain, the basalt desert was covered in short grasses. Other areas were bone dry. The grassed areas held not only **Masked Lark** but concentrations of **Kori Bustard** *Ardeotis kori struthiunculus* and **Northern Crowned Plover** *Vanellus coronatus*. That evening we reached Turbi where we obtained good photographs of 'Horr' **White-crowned Starling** *Spreo albicapillus horrensis* and the *maculosus* subspecies of **Spotted Thick-knee** *Burhinus capensis*.

### *Chalbi desert and Horr*

Chalbi desert, at 550–800 m, is a mixture of rocky basalt desert and sandy areas. To the west, most of the sandy areas are covered by dense *Comiphora* scrub. Most of the area is relatively flat but in the west Mt Kulal, which reaches 1,340 m, an extinct volcano at the south-east corner of Lake Turkana, rises from the desert.

In the mission village of Kargi, we came to a small waterhole where we photographed **Pink-breasted Lark** *Mirafra poecilosterna*, **Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata somaliensis*, **Yellow-spotted Petronia** *Petronia pyrgita*, **Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* and several others. Pitching camp, there was a wealth of wildlife so we created a temporary waterhole using a tarpaulin. **Star-spotted Nightjars** *Caprimulgus stellatus* were soon flitting around, but unfortunately we quickly fell asleep. By the following morning the water was gone and a host of footprints indicated that we had missed a good show.

Continuing west we headed up Mt Kulal. The valley at the base of the volcano is forested and we quickly photographed a group of 'Horr' **Scaly Chatterer** *Turdoides aylmeri boranensis*, some 100 km north of its known range. This is perhaps unsurprising as the forests follow riverbeds, and this riverbed originated some 100 km south-west! Surveys may well reveal that chatterers occur along such valleys far into the Chalbi, provided the habitat holds out, which if confirmed would expand its known range considerably. Climbing Mount Kulal via a very narrow track, we encountered some new

species including **Somali Golden-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza poliopleura* and **Red-billed Buffalo Weaver** *Bubalornis niger intermedius*, as well as the majestic **Gerenuk** *Litocranius walleri*.

### *Lake Turkana*

The south-east shore of Lake Turkana is an arid basaltic boulderfield running down to the sandy, silty shores of the lake. We used Loyangalani, a small village on this shore, as our base and stayed in cabins at El Molo campground. The area is very hot and rugged, but the lakeshore abounded with waterbirds and waders (many of them en route to Eurasia), none of which seemed too alarmed by human presence, and permitted close approach.

### *Lake Turkana to Maralal*

The Maralal area is rugged, with high forested hills, steep valleys and upland badlands, interspersed by desert scrub and wide open grassy highland plateaux at higher elevations. We returned south towards Maralal through Southern Horr

region into Western Samburu. The main track is very rough with many steep climbs and descents. On the steeper parts, we usually stopped and birded around the passes to let the engine not overheat, as well as occasionally changing the water. By driving slowly and checking waterholes and other suitable habitat, we obtained excellent photographs of species such as **White-bellied Bustard** *Eupodotis senegalensis canicollis*, **Rosy-patched Bush-shrike** *Rhodophoneus cruentus hilgerti* and **Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird** *Anthreptes orientalis*. We stayed at a small guesthouse near the centre of Maralal.

To view more photographs and the complete bird list, please visit our website: <http://www.birdexplorers.com/>

*Bird Explorers, PO Box 12, Crow's Nest, New South Wales, 1585, Australia.*







# Recent Reports



These are largely unconfirmed records published for interest only; records are mostly from late 2006 and early 2007, with a few from earlier dates. We thank all birders who have sent in their records and urge them to submit full details to the relevant national or regional organisations. It is suggested that observations of each species be compared with relevant literature to set new data in context and that observers who are unfamiliar with the status of birds in a particular country refer to R. J. Dowsett's (1993) Afrotropical avifaunas: annotated country checklists (in R. J. Dowsett & F. Dowsett-Lemaire. *A*

*Contribution to the Distribution and Taxonomy of Afrotropical and Malagasy Birds*. Tauraco Res. Rep. 5. Liège: Tauraco Press) or more recent or appropriate sources before submitting records.

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Les observations ci-après sont en majeure partie non confirmées et sont publiées uniquement dans le but d'informer. La plupart des données sont de fin 2006 et début 2007; quelques-unes sont plus anciennes. Nous remercions tous les ornithologues qui ont pris la peine de nous faire parvenir leurs données

et nous recommandons de les envoyer, dûment documentées, aux organisations nationales ou régionales concernées. Il est conseillé de vérifier le statut des espèces observées dans la littérature appropriée, afin de mettre les nouvelles données en perspective, et de consulter notamment R. J. Dowsett (1993) Afrotropical avifaunas: annotated country checklists (in R. J. Dowsett & F. Dowsett-Lemaire. *A Contribution to the Distribution and Taxonomy of Afrotropical and Malagasy Birds*. Tauraco Res. Rep. 5. Liège: Tauraco Press) ou des sources plus récentes ou appropriées.

## Azores

The following records are from November 2006–April 2007. The ringed **Bermuda Petrel** *Pterodroma cabow* was again present in a burrow on Vila, off Santa Maria, on the night of 12/13 December; it was first discovered there on 17 November 2002 and it returned in 2003 (cf. *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl.* 124: 202–206). A juvenile **Double-crested Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax auritus* stayed at Mosteiros, São Miguel, from 25 October to at least 17

February (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 45, 106).

On São Miguel, a **Snowy Egret** *Egretta thula* was seen at Maia on 21 February (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 108) and single **American Great Egrets** *E. alba egretta* were at Ribeira Quente on 4 February, Povoação on 11 February and Lagoa das Furnas on 19–21 February and 8 April (per *Birding World* 20: 55, 147). A first-winter **Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias* at Lagoa das Furnas, São Miguel, on 31 January is considered

to be the same individual as the one on Flores in November (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 108).

The long-staying male **Wood Duck** *Aix sponsa* at Terra Nostra Park, Furnas, was still present in April; it was first reported here on 12 October 2002. Two male **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* stayed at Lagoa das Furnas, São Miguel, from 11 January until at least 21 February, with two male **Green-winged Teal** *A. (crecca) carolinensis* also there. A **Ring-necked**

## Captions to plate on opposite page

**Figure 1–2.** Long-tailed Skua / Labbe à longue queue *Stercorarius longicaudus*, Lake Ndutu, Tanzania, 4 May 2007 (Aadje Geertsma)

**Figure 3–4.** Grey-backed Storm-petrel / Océanite néréide *Garrodia nereis*, off Cape Town, South Africa, 14 April 2007 (Barrie Rose)

**Figure 5.** Yellow-legged Gull / Goéland leucophée *Larus cachinnans* with Lesser Black-backed Gulls / Goélands bruns *L. fuscus*, Rio del Rey estuary, Cameroon, 26 January 2007 (Jaap van der Waarde)

**Figure 6.** Eleonora's Falcon / Faucon d'Eléonore *Falco eleonora*, Picard, Aldabra, Seychelles, 12 December 2006 (Guy Esparon)

**Figure 7.** Tufted Duck / Fuligule morillon *Aythya fuligula*, Alphonse, Seychelles, 24 December 2007 (Adrian Skerrett)

**Figure 8.** Rose-coloured Starlings / Etourneaux roselins *Sturnus roseus*, Abiatta-Shalla Lakes National Park, Ethiopia, April 2007 (Rob Tizard)

**Figure 9.** Yellow-billed Ducks / Canards à bec jaune *Anas undulata*, Lake Oku, Cameroon, 5 December 2006 (Jaap van der Waarde)



Bufflehead / Petit Garrot *Bucephala albeola* (Pete Leonard)

**Duck** *Aythya collaris* was at Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, on 19 December, whilst four stayed at Lagoa Azul, São Miguel, from 8 January until at least 21 February (per *Birding World* 19: 496, 20: 12, 55, 147). A female **Bufflehead** *Bucephala albeola* at Cabrito Reservoir, Terceira, on 19 November, was the third for the Azores (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 43).

Up to three **American Coots** *Fulica americana* remained at Lagoa das Furnas, São Miguel, in January, with two present on 8 April; on Flores, a first-winter stayed at Lagoa Seca on 22–25 December and an adult at Poço da Alagoinha on 23 December (per *Birding World* 20: 147; *Dutch Birding* 29: 45). Two **Hudsonian Whimbrels** *Numenius (phaeopus) hudsonicus* were reported from Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, on 5 January, with at least one at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, on 24 January and one at Caloura, São Miguel, on 4 February (per *Birding World* 20: 12, 55; *Dutch Birding* 29: 48). A **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* was at Povoação, São Miguel, from 24 January until 4 February, with two at Lagoa Azul on 17 February (per *Birding World* 20: 55). Up to two first-winter **Franklin's Gulls** *Larus pipixcan* were seen at Ponta Delgada harbour, São Miguel, on 11–22 November. The first **Common Gull** *L. canus* of the Nearctic subspecies *brachydactyla* for the Azores, which was on Terceira from 18 February to 24 March 2003, has recently been accepted by the Portuguese Rarities Committee (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 48, 179). A first-winter **Laughing Gull** *L. atricilla* was in Vila do Porto harbour, Santa Maria, on 4 December. An adult **Bonaparte's Gull** *L. philadelphia* was also at Praia

da Vitoria on 25 January was still present in February. A first-winter **Ring-billed Gull** *L. delawarensis* was in Horta harbour, Faial, on 17–18 December and six at Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, on 19 December, with 26 there on 25 January and 28 on 2 February; there were up to five at Ponta Delgada harbour in February, with three still there on 9 April. A second-winter **American Herring Gull** *L. argentatus smithsonianus* was at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, on 19 January, with three first-winters at Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, on 26 January, one at Praia do Populo, São Miguel, on 22 February, and two at Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, on 2 March. Three **Glaucous Gulls** *L. hyperboreus* and three **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucoideus* were observed on São Miguel in February (per *Birding World* 19: 455, 496, 20: 12, 55–56, 102, 147).

A **Belted Kingfisher** *Megasceryle alcyon* was found on Pico on 5 March, and two **American Buff-bellied Pipits** *Anthus rubescens* were at Vila, Santa Maria, on 18 January. The two **American Barn Swallows** *Hirundo rustica erythrogaster* first seen on Corvo on 20 October were still present on 2 November. Twelve **Fieldfares** *Turdus pilaris* were at Planalto dos Graminhais, São Miguel, on 14 January. The third **Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas* for the Azores was photographed on Corvo on 29 October (per *Birding World* 19: 455, 20: 12, 102; *Dutch Birding* 29: 58, 111).

## Benin

In January 2007, a pale-morph **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* was observed in savanna woodland north of Kountori, Atacora, on 23rd. A **Shining-blue Kingfisher** *Alcedo quadribrachys* was noted on the stream below Tanougou waterfalls, Pendjari National Park, on 27th (JM & SM).

## Botswana

The following records are mostly from the period December 2006–early June 2007, with a few from earlier. Totals of 3,206 **Great**

**White Pelicans** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* and 49 **Pink-backed Pelicans** *P. rufescens* were at Nata Delta on 30 January, with another seven of the latter at Sua Spit on 11 February. On 2 January a **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* was seen at Dopotta, Tuli Block, and four in nearby Majale; two were at Coombe Farm on the Limpopo on 2–3 June. At Sua Spit, in the Makgadikgadi system, there were an estimated 100,000+ **Lesser Flamingos** *Phoeniconaias minor* on 11 February, together with 500+ **Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus (ruber) roseus*. In early March an aerial survey was made of the flamingo colony on Sua Pan. With the lack of rain and intense heat during late January and February only 1,000–2,000 chicks remained, huddled around an already abandoned nesting colony; no adults were on nests.

Away from the northern wetlands, a **Fulvous Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna bicolor* was at Bokaa Dam on 21 January and three at Sua Spit on 11 February; a count of 500 was made on the Chobe floodplain in January. There were 831 **White-backed Ducks** *Tbalassornis leuconotus* on the Boteti River and 204 on the Thamalakane River near Maun during January. The total count of **Maccoa Ducks** *Oxyura maccoa* in south-east Botswana in January was 91 birds at four sites. **Knob-billed Ducks** *Sarkidiornis melanotos* rarely breed in the south-east, exceptions being in the wet summer of 1999/2000, so two ducklings in the Kopong Hills on 4 March 2006 are of note. On the Chobe floodplain 3,559 were seen in late July 2006. A male **Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta* was observed in Chobe National Park on 2 February.

Two nests of **African White-backed Vultures** *Gyps africanus* were seen with well-grown juveniles on 23 September 2006, between Phitsane Molopo and Metlojane in the south-east, whilst in northern Botswana 172 nests were located in an aerial survey. At least 20 nests were seen near the Limpopo River at Coombe Farm on 2–3 June. A male **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* was

at Lake Ngami in early January and two were reported from Nata Sanctuary on 30 January, where four **Montagu's Harriers** *C. pygargus* were noted during the same month. A single **Pallid Harrier** *C. macrourus* was seen further south at Sua Spit in early February. **Black Sparrowhawks** *Accipiter melanoleucus* were seen in March/April at three sites in south-east Botswana: near Kanye, at Ngotane near Gaborone and near Mogobane. **Jackal Buzzards** *Buteo rufofuscus* were observed near Kanye on 21 January (one) and near Lobatse (a pair). **Peregrine Falcons** *Falco peregrinus* were reported from near Francistown in early January, on the Chobe River near Kasane on 27 January and in Chobe National Park, where two were seen in early February.

The only significant group of **Wattled Cranes** *Bugeranus carunculatus* was on the Jao Flats, Okavango Delta, where 56 were present on 27 January. There were 12 **Grey Crowned Cranes** *Balearica regulorum* at Nata Sanctuary on 30 January and two at Sua Spit on 11 February; this species was also seen at Kazuma Pan on 31 January and at Savuti water-hole, on the western side of Savuti Marsh, on 6 February.

There was a count of 210 **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanni* at Bokaa Dam on 21 January and over 1,000 at Lake Ngami in the second week of January. In the same month, two **White-fronted Plovers** *Charadrius marginatus* were at Bokaa Dam, one at Lake Ngami and eight at Maun sewage ponds. Also at Bokaa Dam in January were five **Caspian Plovers** *C. asiaticus*. The only sightings of **Chestnut-banded Plovers** *C. pallidus* were in the Makgadikgadi system where 14 were at Nata Sanctuary on 30 January and eight at Sua Spit on 11 February. There was a count of 59 **Common Ringed Plovers** *C. hiaticula* at Bokaa Dam on 21 January. **African Wattled Lapwings** *Vanellus senegallus* are scarce in south-east Botswana but three were seen at Lobatse on 28 October 2006 and 8–12 on 23 January. Single **Green Sandpipers**

*Tringa ochropus* were reported from Dopotta, Tuli Block, on 5 January 2006, Gamoleele Dam on 21 January 2007 and along the Chobe River on 8 April. In the southern Okavango Delta, 14 **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* were seen on 26–27 December and ten at Lake Ngami in the second week of January.

A single **Grey-headed Gull** *Larus cirrocephalus* was at a small pan near Sojwe Pan on 21 May 2006, five at Nata Delta and 30 at Sua Spit on 10/11 June 2006, with three there on 8 October. Small numbers bred at Lake Ngami in late October. In 2007, 98 were counted at Nata Delta on 30 January and 65 at Sua Spit on 11 February. An adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *L. fuscus* was photographed in the Linyanti in December and two immatures were at Lake Ngami in early January. A flock of 38 **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* was on the Boteti River on 28 January.

Two **Grey-headed Kingfishers** *Halcyon leucocephala* were at Dopotta, in the Tuli Block, on 30 December, one near Kazungula in early January and two on the Jao Flats on 27 January. Also at Dopotta, hundreds of **Dusky Larks** *Pinarocorys nigricans* were present on 28 December–9 January, with up to ten seen together. The summer drought may have resulted in the appearance of three groups of **Grey-backed Sparrow Larks** *Eremopterix verticalis* near Mogobane Dam on 15 April, well away from their usual range. In the south-east five **Orange-throated Longclaws** *Macronyx capensis* were in grassland north of Kgoro Pan on 15 October 2006.

Highlights of a trip to south-west Botswana in late April to early May



Dusky Lark / Alouette brune  
*Pinarocorys nigricans* (Pete Leonard)

included a pair of **Burchell's Coursers** *Cursorius rufus* at Tshane Tshane Pan, c.100 **Stark's Larks** *Eremalauda starki* at Swart Pan, c.12 in two locations in the Nossob Valley within Botswana, and c.40 at Tshane Tshane Pan, pairs and small groups of **Pink-billed Larks** *Spizocorys conirostris* noted on six occasions in dune slacks, a **Plain-backed Pipit** *Anthus leucophrys* near Sita Pan, a pale **Tractrac Chat** *Cercomela tractrac* at Swart Pan and a pair of slightly darker chats at Tshane Tshane Pan, with a total of 39 **Dusky Sunbirds** *Cinnyris fuscus* at the northern boundary of Mabuasechube Game Reserve (part of Kgalakgadi Transfrontier Park), probably representing an influx into Botswana (CBr, ID, MG, PH, PHo, GM, MM, RR, DS, ST, MvdV, JuZ et al., per ST).

## Cameroon

Records from the period October 2006–June 2007 include the following. In January, **Great White Pelicans** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* were seen several times at the coast in the Ndian basin, the largest group being 130 on Saviour Island on 24th; there are few coastal records for this species, although it has been reported previously at this locality. Five **Yellow-billed Ducks** *Anas undulata* were on Lake Oku on 5 December (Fig. 9) and 19 May, whilst an exceptionally large group of 50 was on nearby Bamendjing reservoir on 6 March; this species is rare and very local in West Africa, where it occurs only in Cameroon and neighbouring Nigeria. **African White-backed Vulture** *Gyps africanus* was recorded at Mt Manengouba on 10 April and 4 June, where it is apparently attracted by Fulani settlements with cattle; there are few records this far south. A **Brown Snake Eagle** *Circaetus cinereus* was observed near Bafia along the Bafoussam–Yaoundé road on 31 May; this savanna species is not frequently reported this far south (JvdW). A male **Savile's Bustard** *Eupodotis savilei* was seen in the Waza area on 8 March; this is only the fourth record for Cameroon (NB0).



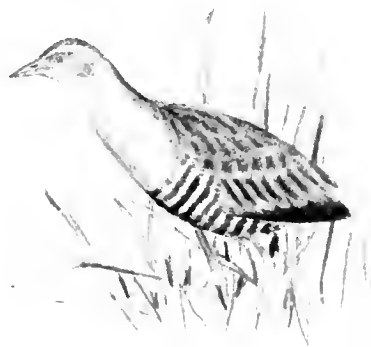
African Skimmer / Bec-en-ciseaux  
d'Afrique *Rynchops flavirostris*  
(Pete Leonard)

Five **Black-winged Stilts** *Himantopus himantopus* were observed in an abandoned sand quarry near Douala on 13 January; this species occurs mostly north of the Adamawa, but there are some records further south in the dry season. A group of 116 **Pied Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* was observed on Saviour Island on 27 March; there are relatively few reports for Cameroon. On 2 May, a breeding colony of 1,000 **Grey-headed Gulls** *Larus cirrocephalus* was found at Bamendjing Reservoir; this species is common in the inundation area in the far north but has previously only occasionally been recorded so far south. In a roost of Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus* in the Rio del Rey estuary, a similar-sized gull with pale grey upperparts was photographed on 26 January and identified as a **Yellow-legged Gull** *L. cachinnans*; this would be a new species for Cameroon (Fig. 5). A flock of 1,761 **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* was seen near Bamusso, in the Ndian basin, on 25 January; this is possibly the largest congregation recorded in West and Central Africa and represents a significant proportion of the total population of the subregion, which is estimated at 7,000–13,000 birds. In March, hundreds were observed on the Sanaga River, where they breed (*JvdW*). Excellent views of **Southern Hyliotas** *Hyliota australis* on Mt Kupe in March once more confirmed that they were this species rather than Yellow-bellied Hyliotas *H. flavigaster* (*NBo*). On 30 October, several **Yellow-crowned Bishops** *Euplectes afer* and **Fan-tailed Widowbirds** *E. axillaris* were seen in ricefields on the Ndop plain; both species are patchily distributed in Cameroon, but appeared common here (*JvdW*).

## Canary Islands

The following records are from October 2006–April 2007. Wildfowl observed included **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* (first-winter/female at Catalina García, Fuerteventura, from 27 October until at least 13 January, and a male at Barranco de Tirajana, Gran Canaria, on 3–16 March), **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* (male at Catalina García from 25 October until at least 13 January, and a female still at El Fraile pond, Tenerife, on 8 January), and **Lesser Scaup** *A. affinis* (two first-winter males at Catalina García from 29 November until at least 6 March and a female again at Salinas de Janubio, Lanzarote, in late January and still present in March). Also at Catalina García was a **Red-knobbed Coot** *Fulica cristata*, on 7–8 December. A **Short-toed Snake Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus* was at Bartolomé de Tirajana, Gran Canaria, on 4–20 January (per *Birding World* 19: 455, 496, 20: 12, 56, 102).

On Tenerife, a dark-morph **Booted Eagle** *Hieraetus pennatus* was east of Playa Paraiso on 2 January (*DR*), at Buenavista on 15 April and at El Río on 20th (per *Birding World* 20: 147). The second and third **African Crakes** *Crex egregia* for Tenerife were adults found moribund at Radazul harbour, El Rosario, on 15 November and Almeida, Santa Cruz, on 16 November; the first was a moribund adult in November 2001 (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 45). The fourth **African Crake** for the Canaries was caught at La Garita, Gran Canaria, on 12 January, and taken into care (per *Birding World* 20: 12). A **European Water Rail** *Rallus*



African Crake / Râle des prés  
*Crex egregia* (Pete Leonard)

*aquaticus* was heard at Maspalomas, Gran Canaria, on 15 January (*GO*).

A **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* was at Salinas del Carmen, Fuerteventura, on 2 January (per *Birding World* 20: 12). On Gran Canaria, an adult **Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus* was observed in the laurel woods at Los Tilos, on 24 March (*KB*), whilst two pairs of **Laughing Doves** *Streptopelia senegalensis* were nest building at Maspalomas in late January. A **Eurasian Scops Owl** *Otus scops* was calling at Arguineguín, Gran Canaria, on 21 January (*GO*). Two **Rock Martins** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* were reported from Costa Teguise, Lanzarote, in late January (*GO* & per *Birding World* 20: 56) and **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* at Jandia, Fuerteventura, on 4–7 January (per *Birding World* 20: 12).

## Cape Verde Islands

The following records are from December 2006–April 2007. Two **Great Cormorants** *Phalacrocorax carbo lucidus* photographed on Boavista on 28 March and one at Barragem de Poilão, near Banana, Santiago, from 3 March into April are among the very few reports of any cormorant in the Cape Verdes (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 173; *PC*). Also on Santiago, an **Intermediate Egret** *Egretta intermedia* was at Praia harbour on 28 and 30 March. Other rare herons for the Cape Verdes included an immature male **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus* at Barragem de Poilão on 22 March, a **Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* at Rabil Lagoon, Boavista, **Squacco Herons** *Ardeola ralloides* at Manuel da Luz dam, on Boavista, on 5 April and at Barragem de Poilão on 4–30 March, a **Black Heron** *Egretta ardesiaca* on Raso on 6 March (the second for the archipelago), and dark-morph **Western Reef Egrets** *E. gularis* at Rabil Lagoon, Boavista, on 10 March and on Santiago on 27 March (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 173). A single **Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* was at Mindelo sewage ponds, São Vicente, on 1–2 January (*HH*) and 26 March (*PC*), whilst six, including

two ringed in the Netherlands, were at Barragem de Poilão in March (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 173). Mindelo sewage ponds also held a male **Common Teal** *Anas crecca* on 1–2 January (HH).

On Raso, a **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* was observed on 28 December (HH) and a 'ringtail' **Montagu's Harrier** *C. pygargus* on 24 March. Up to five **Cape Verde Buzzards** *Buteo (buteo) bannermani* were at São Jorge dos Orgãos, Santiago, on 27 March and one was there together with an adult **Cape Verde Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus madens* on 29 March. An adult pale-morph **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* was watched in display-flight at Boa Entrada, Santiago, on 21 March. A **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* was at Barragem de Poilão, Santiago, on 21–22 March and **Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* successfully raised young both there and on Boavista in March–April (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 175).

Two **American Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica* were present at Mindelo, São Vicente, on 1–2 January (HH), with three there on 1–25 February at least; at the same site, two **Little Ringed Plovers** *Charadrius dubius* were seen on 16 February (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 108), a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* on 1–2 January (HH) and 1 February (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 108), and a **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* also on 1–2 January (HH). A **Wilson's Snipe** *Gallinago (gallinago) delicata* was identified at Barragem de Poilão on 26–30 March; from 3 March, two **Common Snipes** *G. gallinago* were also there (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 175). Two **Green Sandpipers** *Tringa ochropus* were reported from Santiago on 3–4 March (per *Birding World* 20: 102).

Photographs of the second **Slender-billed Gull** *Larus genei* for the Cape Verdes were taken at Boca de Salina, Boavista, on 15 February, whilst a **Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* was photographed at Farol de Varandinha, Boavista, on 2 December (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 111). A **European Bee-eater** *Merops*

*apiaster* was at Mindelo sewage ponds, São Vicente, on 2 January; this is apparently only the third recent report for the archipelago and the first for São Vicente, the previous records being on Sal in May 1997 and Boavista in May 1999 (HH). An estimated 100–130 **Raso Larks** *Alauda razae* were present on Raso on 20–23 March. The first **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* for the Cape Verdes was photographed on Boavista on 11 April (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 179). On 1–2 January, a **White Wagtail** *M. alba* stayed at Mindelo sewage ponds, São Vicente (HH). The first **European Robin** *Eritacus rubecula* for the islands was at Jardim Botânico, São Jorge dos Orgãos, on 4 February (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 179).

### Central African Republic

Records from the period July 2006–June 2007 from around Djouibissi, c.70 north of Bambari, Ouaka Prefecture, in the centre of the country, include one **Ovambo Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter ovampensis* on 19 August and two on 1 October, a **Red-chested Flufftail** *Sarothrura rufa* on 20 May, a pair of **Brown-chested Lapwings** *Vanellus superciliosus* apparently on territory on 27 March, with other records in July–May, a **Ross's Turaco** *Musophaga rossae* on 16 May, the last **Common Swifts** *Apus apus* migrating on 2 June, 30+ **Pallid Swifts** *A. pallidus* on 8 April, single **Black-headed Bee-eaters** *Merops breweri* on 10 November and 19 December, four **Black-and-white-casqued Hornbills** *Bycanistes subcylindricus* on 10 January, eight on 9 April and two on 11 April, two **Yellow-billed Barbets** *Trachyphonus purpura-*

*tus* on 27 May, a female **Blue Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina azurea* on 15 May, at least one **Little Grey Greenbul** *Andropadus gracilis* on 27 May, a **Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* on 13 January, a **Heuglin's Wheatear** *Oenanthe beuglini* on 27 March, one **Buff-throated Apalis** *Apalis rufogularis* on 29 October and at least four on 27 May, an **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* on 22 October, a **Green Crombec** *Sylvietta virens* on 15 May, a **Green Hylia** *Hylia prasina* on 15 May and at least four on 27 May, single **Red-bellied Paradise Flycatchers** *Terpsiphone rufiventer* on 19 August and 27 May, two **Shrike Flycatchers** *Megabyas flammulatus* on 27 May, **Brown Illadopsis** *Illadopsis fulvescens* on 29 October and 6 May, a pair of **Pygmy Sunbirds** *Hedydipna platurus* nest building on 26 December, a first-winter **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* on 16–18 March, several **Baglaffeht Weavers** *Ploceus baglaffeht* on various dates throughout the period, small numbers of **Heuglin's Masked Weavers** *P. beuglini* throughout with at least four breeding pairs, a **Chestnut-breasted Negrofinch** *Nigrita bicolor* on 29 October, and a **Brown-rumped Bunting** *Emberiza affinis* on 23 July.

In the capital Bangui, a pair of **Bat Hawks** *Macheiramphus alcinus* can be observed easily from the Bangui Hotel on the riverfront (at dusk they often perch on the building) and **Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush** *Cicladusa ruficauda* is a common garden bird (NV).

### Congo-Brazzaville

The following records were reported for the period January–June 2007. A **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* was seen in Conkouati-Douli National Park during waterbird counts in June; if confirmed, this will be the first record for the country. In the same month, **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* was seen for the second time in Pointe Noire. Recent additions to the list of Lac Tele Community Reserve include **Olive Ibis** *Bostrychia olivacea*, **Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo** *Cercococcyx mechowi*,



Shrike-Flycatcher / Bias écorcheur *Megabyas flammulatus* (Pete Leonard)



**Willcocks's Honeyguide** *Indicator willcocksii* and **Preuss's Weaver** *Ploceus preussi*. A **Zenker's Honeyguide** *Melignomon zenkeri* was heard singing in mid-June 2007. The waterbird survey in February at Lac Tele proved very productive, with internationally important numbers of **African Darter** *Anhinga rufa* and **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea*. **Pink-backed Pelican** *Pelecanus rufescens* has also returned to breed, having been exterminated by hunting in the 1960s. **Chattering Cisticola** *Cisticola anonymus*, a forest-edge species, was seen in the centre and north of the reserve, but is uncommon elsewhere in northern Congo (HR).

## Egypt

In October 2006–February 2007, the following were reported. Fourteen **White-tailed Lapwings** *Vanellus leucurus* were counted at Lake Qarun, 2 km from Faiyum, between 21 January and 16 February (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 175). In the Red Sea mountains 30 km west of Hurghada, **Hume's Owl** *Strix butleri* was heard on 24 December. An immature **Black Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas podobe* was at Marsa Alam, Wadi Gamla, southern Red Sea, on 13–14 November, again later the same month and on 1 January; this would constitute the second record for the country and the first outside Abu Simbel. Also there was a **Hypocolius** *Hypocolius ampelinus* on 30 December–1 January. The first **Pied Stonechat** *Saxicola caprata* for Egypt, if accepted, was photographed at El Gouna, Red Sea, on 2–3 October. On 27 October, **Black Drongo** *Dicrurus macrocercus* was reported at Aswan; this would be another first for Egypt, if accepted as a wild bird (per *Sandgrouse* 29: 10).

## Ethiopia

Records from December 2006 are as follows. A dark-morph **Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis* was at Lake Hora on 1st. What appeared to be an adult **Beaudouin's Snake Eagle** *Circaetus beaudouini* was near Giba on 18th. On 12th, 41 **Pacific Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis fulva* were seen near

Lake Abiatta. Three swifts, seen and heard calling in the Bale Mountains on 4th were identified as **African Black Swifts** *Apus barbatus*. A **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* was at Lake Ziway on 12th and a **Ménétries Warbler** *Sylvia mystacea* at Bilen Lodge, in the Awash area, on 14th (DH).

In late April 2007, two **Rose-coloured Starlings** *Sturnus roseus* in breeding plumage were photographed amidst a flock of **Wattled Starlings** *Creatophora cinerea* in Abiatta-Shalla Lakes National Park (Fig. 8; RT); this is the second record for Ethiopia, the first being from 23 March 2005, when one was photographed, c.50 km west of Yavello, also in the company of **Wattled Starlings** (cf. *Bull. ABC* 13: 75).

## The Gambia

Records from November 2006–January 2007 include the following. A subadult **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* over Sabi on 7 December is the first record from Upper River Division; also there was a **Lappet-faced Vulture** *Torgos tracheliotus* (KR). Many **African White-backed Vultures** *Gyps africanus* were attending nests in *Borassus* palms in Central River Division on 11 December (CB). An adult **Beaudouin's Snake Eagle** *Circaetus beaudouini* flew over Kunkilling Forest Park, CRD, on 11 December (CB). A **Danish-ringed Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* found killed by a plane-strike at Yundum, Western Division, on 27 November is the third Danish sub-Saharan recovery (CB). An immature **Red-thighed Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter erythropus* was in Abuko, WD, on 11 January, and a pair of **Ovambo Sparrowhawks** *A. ovampensis* at Jambur Woods (NBo). An **Ayres's Hawk Eagle** *Hieraetus ayresii* with an immaculate white head flew over Kiang West, Lower River Division, on 15 December (CB) and a **Barbary Falcon** *Falco pelegrinoides* over Sabi, URD, on 22 November (KR). At least ten **Adamawa Turtle Doves** *Streptopelia hypopyrrha* singing in Kunkilling Forest Park, CRD, on 30

December, are an indication of the good numbers present there; a nest has still not been found (CB). Two same-sized fledgling **Levaillant's Cuckoos** *Clamator levaillantii* were being fed by a group of five **Brown Babblers** *Turdoides plebejus* at Abuko Nature Reserve, WD, on 9 December (CB). A number of road-killed and live, adult and first-year **Red-necked Nightjars** *Caprimulgus ruficollis* were collected and photographed in CRD during November–December (CB). A **Golden-tailed Woodpecker** *Campethera abingoni* was at Tuman Tenda and Tendaba, WD, in January; this is a rare and elusive species in The Gambia (NBo).

A female **Black-crowned Sparrow Lark** *Eremopterix nigriceps* was photographed at Kaur wetlands, just east of Farafenni, North Bank Division, on 9 December (SMi); this would be the first for The Gambia, if accepted. A **Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* in full breeding plumage (rarely seen in The Gambia) was photographed at Kerewan, North Bank Division, on 31 December (ZM). A female or non-breeding male **Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca* seen well at Tuman Tenda exhibited all the features of the subspecies *iberiae* or *speculigera*, the latter often considered a full species, **Atlas Flycatcher** (NBo). A **Southern Grey Shrike** *Lanius meridionalis* was at Sapu, CRD, on 14 December; this rare visitor is usually seen near the coast (CB). A **Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* seen by several observers at Tendaba airfield on 13 January constitutes the first for The Gambia; *Birds of Western Africa* (Borrow & Demey 2001) mentions only four previous records from the region, two each from northern Mauritania and the Cape Verdes (YYB, JS, RS et al., per CB).

## Ghana

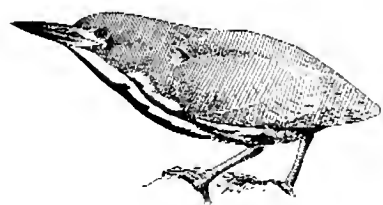
In early February 2007, a **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* was claimed near Elmina (apparently only the second for Ghana, if accepted) and several **Arctic Skuas** *Stercorarius parasiticus* were observed



off Cape Coast (IS). In Atewa Range Forest Reserve, the presence of **Nimba Flycatcher** *Melaenornis ammarulae*, which was heard singing briefly on 18 June 2006 (RD), was confirmed by excellent views of two individuals in the canopy on 27 May (AHe); this remarkable find constitutes a new species for Ghana and the easternmost record to date, extending the known range by c.500 km, the previous easternmost locality being Mopri Forest Reserve in Côte d'Ivoire. Apart from the latter country, this local forest resident was previously known only from Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

### Kenya

Records from October–December 2006, from the newly-created Kipini Conservancy, on the coast north of the Tana River, include the following. The last **Madagascar Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* was seen on 22 October and the last **African Cuckoo Hawk** *Aviceda cuculoides*, a migrant to the coast, on 24 October. A **Corn Crake** *Crex crex* was flushed on 10 November; there are few records on the coast. The unusual rains in October–December brought large numbers of **African Crakes** *C. egregia* (some breeding), an invasion of **Lesser Moorhens** *Gallinula angulata* to flooded grassland on 25–26 December and a **Dwarf Bittern** *Ixobrychus sturmii* on 26 December. A group of seven **Pacific Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis fulva* paused at a pan on 10 November, and a **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* was feeding on the beach the same day. At least one **Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* wintered at a pan in December. Small groups of **Forbes-Watson's Swifts** *Apus berliozi* passed or fed over the area from 1 November to at least 25 December,



Dwarf Bittern / Blongios de Sturm  
*Ixobrychus sturmii* (Pete Leonard)

suggesting some wintered there in the unusually wet weather. Both **Eastern Green Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus simplex* and **Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird** *P. bilineatus* were found in forest in the area, confirming they occur further north than previously stated, as well as **Pallid Honeyguide** *Indicator meliphilus* (including one singing in a baobab). **Malindi Pipits** *Anthus melindae* were very common in the short-grass plains, with numbers probably totalling a few thousand, making Kipini Conservancy the most important area for this globally threatened Kenya endemic. A **Black-and-white Flycatcher** *Bias musicus* appeared in a mixed-species flock in a forest patch on 13 October; it was not seen again and the species' status is unclear, but this is a major range extension. **Violet-breasted Sunbirds** *Cinnyris chalcomelas* appeared to be uncommon in the reserve, but were common in flooded thornbush around Garsen, where many were singing, in December. A female **Parasitic Weaver** *Anomalospiza imberbis* lurked around two pairs of Tawny-flanked Prinias *Prinia subflava* on 12–19 October; there are very few records from the coast. Other species not mapped for the north coast in Zimmerman *et al.* (1996, 2001, *Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania*) include **Black Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter melanoleucus*, which was widespread in Kipini, and **Kurrichane Buttonquail** *Turnix sylvaticus*, found to be common in grassland (RJD & FD-L).

### Libya

A total of 6,047 **Lesser Crested Terns** *Sterna bengalensis* was counted during a census in eastern Libya in the first week of August 2006, with 3,102 adults and 1,950 young on Gizeret Ghara and 42 adults and 18 young on Gizeret Al Elba (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 48).

### Madeira

Records from November 2006–April 2007 include the following. A **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* was at Lugar de Baixo on 25 November (per *Birding World* 19: 455). The first **Merlin**

*Falco columbarius* for Madeira was a male on 1 and 4 December at Paul da Serra. A first-winter **Little Crake** *Porzana parva* at Lugar de Baixo on 4 December was the second for Madeira. An adult **Sora** *P. carolina* photographed at the same site on 4–5 December was another first for Madeira and the second for Macaronesia (the previous was in the Azores on 14–16 November 1998); it remained until at least 22 February. Two first-winter **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularius* occurred in November–December, with one staying through February; an adult was present at Lugar de Baixo from 29 April. From 25 January to 4 February, the first **Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* for the island, a first-winter, was in Funchal harbour (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 45–48, 108–111, 175). Also there were a first-winter **Ring-billed Gull** *L. delawarensis* on 25–26 November, with an adult on 26th, and at least four **Mediterranean Gulls** *L. melanocephalus* on 20–26 November (per *Birding World* 19: 455).

### Mali

During a waterbird census of the Inner Niger delta using a light aircraft, on 9–21 January 2007, the highest numbers since at least 1991 were recorded for several species, including **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* (13,700 individuals, against 12,532 in 2006, which was already a record: *Bull. ABC* 14: 100), **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* (121,100; 69,690 in 2006), **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* (19,133), **Intermediate Egret** *E. intermedia* and **Great Egret** *E. alba* (11,445; 6,500 in 2006), **Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* (9,831; 8,145 in 2006), and **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* (15,066; 13,590 in 2006). Additional counts included 2,856 **Purple Herons** *Ardea purpurea*, 507 **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia*, 2,338 **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis falcinellus*, 6,450 **Spur-winged Geese** *Plectropterus gambensis*, only 10,612 **Northern Pintails** *Anas acuta*, 226,250 **Garganey** *A. querquedula* (815,800 in 2006), 11,775 **Black-winged Stilts** *Himantopus*



Garganey / Sarcelles d'été *Anas querquedula* (Pete Leonard)

himantopus, 337 Egyptian Plovers *Pluvianus aegyptius*, 2,930 Spur-winged Lapwings *Vanellus spinosus*, 98,265 Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* and only 5,990 Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa*; 22,170 egrets *Egretta* spp. and herons *Ardea* spp. were too distant to be specifically identified. Two Eurasian Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia* were observed c.10 km north of Mopti on 18th (OG).

### Mauritania

The long-staying Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus vetula* at Zira, Banc d'Arguin, first seen in 1997, was seen again on 8 December 2006. In the north-west, close to the border, c.20 Black-crowned Sparrow Larks *Eremopterix nigriceps*, including at least one fledgling, were seen south of Choûm on 3–4 December and a Dunn's Lark *Eremalauda dunni* was c.23 km south of Boû Lanouâr on 9 December. Fifteen Cricket Warblers *Spiloptila clamans* were found south of Choûm on 4 December and three c.20 km south of Boû Lanouâr on 7 December. At the latter locality, more than 65 Desert Sparrows *Passer simplex* were observed on 7 and 9 December, with more than 55 Sudan Golden Sparrows *P. luteus* south of Choûm on 4 December (per *Birding World* 19: 496; *Dutch Birding* 29: 45–58).

### Morocco

Records from October 2006–April 2007 include the following. A Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*, a rare winter visitor, was at Oued Souss on 16 January (per *Birding World* 20: 12). A Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* was found in the Lower Loukkos marshes, Rharb, on 20 March; the species is a former breeder (at this site), but is now a scarce passage migrant and rare winter visitor. The first Green-backed Heron *Butorides striata* for Morocco was discovered 70 km south of Tazenakht, in the Anti-Atlas, on 18 April (TG). At Merzouga, a dark-morph Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora* was observed on 30 March; this is an early date (per *Birding World* 20: 147–148). An Aquila 11 km west of Tantan, Draa, on 16 December may have been a Tawny Eagle *A. rapax* or, perhaps, a Spanish Imperial Eagle *A. adalberti* (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 45). A juvenile Spanish Imperial Eagle was photographed west of Tan Tan in December and again in February; recent satellite tracking indicate birds disperse as far south as Senegal (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 175). On 31 December, an adult Dark Chanting Goshawk *Melierax metabates* was reported at Oulad Teima, where the species has not been seen for many years (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 108). In February, Barbary Falcons *Falco pelegrinoides* were recorded at Agadir (an immature), Tamri (a pair) and near Oukaimeden (a pair) (EF).

A Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* video-taped at Dayet Srji, Merzouga, Tafilalet, on 13 March 2006, was recently identified and appears to be the first for Morocco (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 108). A Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* was photographed at Oued



Marsh Owl / Hibou du Cap *Asio capensis* (Pete Leonard)

Souss on 23 March; *The Birds of Morocco* (Thévenot *et al.* 2003) mentions 11 previous records for the country, of which six were at the Souss estuary (SB). On 24 December, a first-winter Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* was reported from Oued Souss. A first-winter Grey-headed Gull *L. cirrocephalus* was at Oued Massa on 24 October (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 48, 111). Ring-billed Gulls *L. delawarensis* were identified at Anza (first-winter on 16–21 January) and Oued Chbika (second-winter on 19 January). Two Common Gulls *Larus canus* were at Oued Souss on 16 January, with one there on 3 April (per *Birding World* 20: 12, 148).

Good winter rains resulted in exceptional numbers of Pin-tailed Sandgrouse *Pterocles alchata* at Ikniouen Road in late March, with a flock of c.1,000 passing over on 29th; c.200 flew over Merzouga on 24th and 30th (per *Birding World* 20: 148). A Marsh Owl *Asio capensis* was found dead at the mouth of the Moulouya River in the north-east on 11 February. The first Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* for Morocco was a first-winter male at Essaouira on 23 February (per *Dutch Birding* 29: 179–183). Three Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* were in the Oukaimeden area on 17 February (EF).

### Mozambique

At Vilanculos, two Greater Frigatebirds *Fregata minor* and a Lesser Frigatebird *F. ariel* were seen on 2 January 2007, with two Sooty Terns *Sterna fuscata* and a Lesser Noddy *Anous tenuirostris* there the day before (RM). Two Crab-plovers *Dromas ardeola* and a Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* were at Pomene on 12 January (SK). Crab-plovers were further reported from the Inhambane area in early April (MB, OO & SO).

### Namibia

The following records are from November 2006–April 2007. An American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* was at Swakopmund sewage

works on 29 November (MB) where it remained until at least 6 December; one was at Mile 4 salt works on 18 January, with a second individual subsequently, and both were still present on 25 February (MB, per TH). Three **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* were at Mile 4 salt works in Swakopmund on 20 February (MB), two at the nearby sewage works on 14 March (MB) and one at Walvis Bay lagoon on 25 February (ED). **Common Redshanks** *Tringa totanus* were reported from Mile 4 salt works on 1 November (one; JvT) and 7 January (one; ED), with at least three more there in January (per TH); three were also present on 14 March (MB). **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* were at Walvis Bay on 23 November (no fewer than 24; EM) and Mile 4 salt works on 24 January (three; MB) and 14 March (one; MB). At the latter site, a **Common Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus* was observed on 19 February (MB). Africa's second **Elegant Tern** *Sterna elegans* was discovered at a Sandwich Tern *S. sandwichensis* roost at Mile 4 salt works on 28 January (ED) and remained there until at least 14 March (MB); this may well be the same bird that stayed in the Western Cape, South Africa, in January–February 2006 (see Bull. ABC 14: 104).

## Niger

The most exciting news is that satellite studies have shown a juvenile **Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonora* passed through north-eastern Niger during its southbound migration and an adult female crossed the south-west northbound (MGs); in mainland West Africa, this species is a very rare vagrant, known only from northern Mauritania, in November, and, more recently, Côte d'Ivoire, in March (Bull. ABC 8: 147). In the Agadez region, visits to a number of wetlands in early December 2006 turned up a **Barbary Falcon** *Falco pelegrinoides* at Chinziganen, and a **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* and two **Rüppell's Warblers** *S. rueppelli* at Chinwalmban (SG). The second Montagu's Harrier expedition to



Rüppell's Warbler / Fauvette de Rüppell *Sylvia rueppelli*  
(Pete Leonard)

Niger, in January–February 2007, reported a **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* from a wetland near Birni N'Konni (BK, CT); if accepted, this would be a first for Niger and apparently only the second for West Africa, the first being from Senegal, in January 1999 (cf. Bull. ABC 8: 139–140). Also reported were a mixed group of 43 **African Spoonbills** *Platalea alba*, including many immatures, and 23 **Eurasian Spoonbills** *P. leucorodia* at Tabalak; breeding **Desert Eagle Owls** *Bubo ascalaphus desertorum* near Abalak; a **Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix* west of Birni N'Konni and also midway between Niamey and Dosso; a number of **Greater Hoopoe Larks** *Alaemon alaudipes* in the Agadez region (surprisingly few recent observations); at least six **Mourning Wheatears** *Oenanthe lugens* near Diffa, far south of their known wintering grounds in the Aïr; a group of six **Sennar Penduline Tits** *Anthoscopus punctifrons* near Abalak; a pair of **Desert Sparrows** *Passer simplex* near Agadez; and six **Red-winged Pytilias** *Pytilia phoenicoptera* at a waterhole in the south of Parc Régional du W (JBr, AH, BK, KMo, LS, CT).

## Senegal

Three **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* were foraging with three **Eurasian Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* in Djoudj National Park on 6 December 2006 (per CB). In early 2007, the Djoudj held 10,000 adult **Great White Pelicans** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* and 3,000 chicks, c.1,000 **Lesser Flamingos** *Phoeniconaias*

*minor* and 34,000 **White-faced Whistling Ducks** *Dendrocygna viduata*. An adult **Lappet-faced Vulture** *Torgos tracheliotus* was observed on its nest, sheltering a chick from the sun, c.11 km north of Ouarack, Louga area, on 4 March (HD). Hundreds of **Lesser Kestrels** *Falco naumanni* were seen for the fourth year running in the Kaolack area, on 13–14 January (NBo). On 1 March, 110 **Greater Painted-snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis* were counted at Ndigue, in the Djoudj area (HD). A small wader photographed near Langue de Barbarie on 15 January was identified as a **Western Sandpiper** *Calidris mauri*; this would be the first for Senegal and West Africa, if accepted (NBo). A **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* was photographed in the Djoudj on 3 March; this is apparently only the second for Senegal, the previous record being from January 1991, when one was discovered near Dakar. Over 400 **Black-winged Stilts** *Himantopus himantopus* and 70 **Senegal Thick-knees** *Burbinus senegalensis* were counted at Technopôle, Dakar, on 10 March. An adult **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* was photographed just south of Saint-Louis on 28 February; this is the sixth record for Senegal (HD). An **African Moustached Warbler** *Melocichla mentalis* was at Anambe, south of Velingara in early December (KR).

## Seychelles

Reports received by Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) for November 2006–May 2007 include firsts for no fewer than five species: a **Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea* at Gro Latet, Aride Island, on 24 November, a juvenile female **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* at the sewage ponds on Alphonse on 23–25 December (Fig. 7), a **Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo** *Cuculus rochii* at the Old Settlement, Picard, Aldabra, on 24–29 December, an **African Palm Swift** *Cypsiurus parvus* at Picard, Aldabra, on 20 December, and a **Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris* found exhausted near the cemetery, Picard, Aldabra, on 24 April.



White-throated Needletail / Martinet  
épineux *Hirundapus caudacutus*  
(Pete Leonard)

Other records from the period include the following. A dark-morph **Kermadec Petrel** *Pterodroma neglecta* at Cousin, on 10 January, was the fourth record from Seychelles; the previous three, in 2003, 2004 and 2006, also at Cousin, were all of intermediate morphs and at least two refer to the same individual (see *Bull. ABC* 13: 88–90; 14: 102). A first-year **Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonora* was at the Old Settlement, Picard, on 12 December (Fig. 6) and another on 21 January.

At Providence landfill, Mahé, a **Long-toed Stint** *Calidris subminuta* on 28 January was the second report for Seychelles, whereas a **Temminck's Stint** *C. temminckii* on 10 March was the sixth. Three **Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* were also there on 10 March; ten of the 11 accepted records are of singles and the other concerned two individuals. A **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* stayed at Roche Caiman Bird Sanctuary, Mahé, from 21 February until 10 March. Four **Grey-tailed Tattlers** *Heteroscelus brevipes* at St François Atoll on 1 March, with two until 7 April, constitute the third report for Seychelles; the first two records were of singles. A **White-throated Needletail** *Hirundapus caudacutus* at the airstrip of Alphonse on 1 December was the fifth for Seychelles. A **European Roller** *Coracias garrulus* stayed at the Research Station, Picard, on 16–19 May.

On Mahé, two **White Wagtails** *Motacilla alba* were at Oceangate, on 6 December, whilst a **Yellow Wagtail**

*M. flava*, possibly of the race *beema*, was at Providence landfill on 27 January and another of unknown race at Mare Anglaise on 27 April. A **Grey Wagtail** *M. cinerea* was at the plateau, North Island, on 2–3 November and a **Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* at the Old Settlement, Picard, on 11 February. A **Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus* which landed on a boat at the lagoon, St François Atoll, and was transported to Alphonse and released, was the fourth report for Seychelles. A juvenile **European Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* was in the vicinity of the Settlement, Picard, on 24 December.

The airstrip at Alphonse was particularly productive during the period, with sightings of a first-winter **Amur Falcon** *Falco amurensis* on 25 December, an **Oriental Pratincole** *Glareola maldivarum* on 2–26 December, a **Black-winged Pratincole** *G. nordmanni* on 10–26 December, a **Common Swift** *Apus apus* on 26 April, an adult **Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus* on 11 December, a **Common Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* on 15–17 February, up to six **Barn Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* on 4–21 March, and a **Common House Martin** *Delichon urbicum* on 9–14 April.

The high number of records received from Alphonse was largely due to the opening of a new Island Conservation Centre with full-time staff in February 2007. This has also enabled the regular monitoring of neighbouring St François Atoll and its large wintering wader population. Regular counts at St François uncovered remarkably high numbers of up to 1,750 **Crab-plovers** *Dromas ardeola* and up to 800 **Ruddy Turnstones** *Arenaria interpres*. Also recorded were the highest numbers in Seychelles for **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* (400 in April), **Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola* (250 in March) and **Saunders's Tern** *Sterna saundersi* (1,800 in March). Also on Alphonse, a previously unknown colony of **Wedge-tailed Shearwaters** *Puffinus pacificus* has been discovered. The frigatebird roost on Alphonse has

been found to be of national importance, with counts of up to 4,200 birds, comprising c.95% **Lesser Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel* and 5% **Greater Frigatebird** *F. minor* (AS).

## Sierra Leone

Highlights of five weeks of field work in Gola Forest, from 22 January to 28 February 2007, include the following: two large groups of **White-breasted Guineafowl** *Agelastes meleagrides* (one numbering c.20) in primary forest in Gola North, **Black-collared Lovebird** *Agapornis swindernianus* (first definite record for the country) also in Gola North, **Rufous Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia ussheri* on a small stream at the edge of Gola East, **Brown Nightjar** *Caprimulgus binotatus* found to be widespread and locally common, being very vocal at this season (the first Sierra Leone record was in Gola in 2006), several small groups of **Bates's Swift** *Apus batesi* (also now confirmed for Sierra Leone, cf. Dowsett 1993, *Tauraco Res. Rep.* 5: 30–36), two **Yellow-footed Honeyguides** *Melignomon eisentrauti* in song (Gola East and Gola North), a male **Western Wattled Cuckoo-shrike** *Lobotos lobatus* (near Belebu, Gola North), at least three **Lagden's Bush-shrikes** *Malaconotus lagdeni* holding territories in primary forest (Gola North), and the rediscovery of a small population of **Gola Malimbe** *Malimbus ballmanni* (pairs in three different mixed bird parties, one with a juvenile) in unlogged primary forest in Gola North, c.9 km east of Lalehun, which is not far from the site of the original sightings by Geoffrey Field in 1971–76.

A pair of **Blue-headed Coucals** *Centropus monachus* was singing at a small marsh next to a rubbish tip in the centre of Kenema, and another bird was seen flying across a marsh between Kenema and Gola; surprisingly, these are the first records for the country of what has doubtless been an overlooked species. Two pairs of **Chattering Cisticolas** *Cisticola anonymus* were holding territory in low farmbrush in a forest clearing (Gola North); the more usual habitat in Sierra Leone consists of small nat-

ural swamps. Also of note were large numbers of **African Black Swifts** *Apus barbatus* (up to 100+) over forest and farmbush (identified mainly by their characteristic calls), two observations of **Baumann's Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus baumanni* singing in low, rank *Chromolaena* farmbush, and a pair of **Black-capped Apalis** *Apalis nigriceps* on a hill near Belebu (new for Gola) (FD-L & RJD).

### Socotra

Noteworthy records from a visit in January 2007 include an **Intermediate Egret** *Egretta intermedia* at Wadi Ayhaft on 21st and a **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* at Dixem on 19–20th. Some 500 **Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse** *Pterocles lichtensteinii* were seen at Hadibu on 19th–21st (JH).

### South Africa

The following records are from November 2006–April 2007. On a pelagic out of Cape Town, Africa's first **Grey-backed Storm-petrel** *Garrodia nereis* was photographed on 14 April (Figs. 3–4; JGr). Another Cape pelagic on 24 February yielded a **Northern Royal Albatross** *Diomedea (epomophora) sanfordi* and a **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** *Puffinus pacificus* (TH). Seabirds seen during a two-week trip, 140–160 nautical miles south of Cape Agulhas, in early February included five **Wandering Albatrosses** *Diomedea exulans*, a **Northern Royal Albatross**, two **Sooty Albatrosses** *Phoebastria fusca*, a **Grey Petrel** *Procellaria cinerea*, and several **Leach's Oceanodroma leucorhoa** and **White-bellied Storm-petrels** *Fregetta grallaria* (MGo).

The **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** which has visited Bird Island, Algoa Bay, Eastern Cape, over several sea-

sons was seen again on 17 November (BD). Two vagrant penguins were recorded, both near St Francis Bay, Eastern Cape: a moulting **King Penguin** *Aptenodytes patagonicus* came ashore on 22 January (MLR & LIR) and a subadult **Macaroni Penguin** *Eudyptes chrysolophus*, also about to moult, on 21 February; both were taken to a rehabilitation centre (per TH). It is most likely that they were taken aboard ships and then dumped before docking (JB). A **Red-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon rubricauda* flew over Aston Bay, Eastern Cape, on 2 December; another, first reported on 11 April from St Francis Bay, Eastern Cape, was seen intermittently for the rest of the month (per TH). An unringed **Australian Gannet** *Morus serrator* was on Bird Island in Algoa Bay, Eastern Cape, on 17 November (BD); as all previous individuals at the site have been ringed, this was assumed to be a new arrival; another was noted on 19 March (JGI). A **Greater Frigatebird** *Fregata minor* was soaring over the Umlazi River, near Mtunzini, KwaZulu-Natal, on 10 February (PHi & SHi).

Single **Slaty Egrets** *Egretta vinaceigula* were reported from Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, on 2 December (DD), and Zaagkuil drift, Limpopo Province, on 18 February (RF). Southern Africa's third **Little Blue Heron** *E. caerulea*, discovered near Papendorp, near the mouth of the Olifants River, Western Cape, on 10 November 2001, was still present in March (per TH). Noteworthy raptors include a **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* at Seekoevlei, Memel, Free State, on 12 November (RM), with another near St Lucia, KwaZulu-Natal, on 10 December (JPIR), and an adult **Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor* at Madikwe Game Reserve, North-West Province, on 5 December (JK).

In the Western Cape, single **Eurasian Oystercatchers** *Haematopus ostralegus* were seen near De Hoop Nature Reserve on 30 November (PCh) and near Hermanus on 10 January (CMa). A **Rock Pratincole** *Glareola nuchalis* was discovered at Albasini Dam, Limpopo Province, on

4 November (MT), where it remained until at least 6th (per TH); there are few records for South Africa. The **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* at De Mond Nature Reserve, Western Cape, on 28 October remained until at least 4 January (MMA); others were reported from Geelbek, West Coast National Park, Western Cape, on 18 February (GS), St Francis Bay, Eastern Cape, on 8–10 March at least (GD), and near Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, on 17–21 March at least (PW). A **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* at Velddrif, Western Cape, on 12 November was the 15th record for South Africa (BV); another two were at Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, on 18 January and still present on 16 March (PW). **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* were at De Mond Nature Reserve, Western Cape, on 3 November (KO); at Stanger, north of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, on 16 November (DH); near Mossel Bay, Western Cape, on 25 November (KM & MP); near Bazley Beach, KwaZulu-Natal, on 19 December (GH); at Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, on 18 January (two; PW); north of Polokwane, Limpopo, on 4–11 February (JG); and at Pafuri, Kruger National Park, on 14 February (VW). Five **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* were near Jan Kempdorp, Northern Cape, on 21 February (MA, BHa & MHa) and three at Velddrif, Western Cape, on 4 April (KH & TT). **Common Redshanks** *Tringa totanus* were at Velddrif on 8 December and 17 January (two; JS, ES); Lake Sibaya, KwaZulu-Natal, on 4 January (LH); West Coast National Park, Western Cape, from 9 January until 25 February (TG) and from 24 March until at least 8 April (MKe). **Green Sandpipers** *T. ochropus* were observed at different localities in Kruger National Park on 26 November (KV), 10 December (EK), 4 January (TH, MH, SS & TS), 6 January (PdP) and 28 January (CM). Five **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* at Velddrif, Western Cape, on 13 November (BV) were still present on 17 December (per TH), with at least



Rock Pratincole / Glaréole auréolée  
*Glareola nuchalis* (Pete Leonard)



four there on 19 January (PCo); one was at Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, on 28 January (PW). Two **Red Phalaropes** *P. fulicarius* were seen on a Cape pelagic trip on 27 January (TH); singles were at Wakkerstroom, Mpumalanga, on 15 February (PL), Ruigtehoek dam in Pilanesberg National Park, North-West Province, on 18 February (HL), and Kamfers Dam, Kimberley, Northern Cape, on 16 March (MA, EH).

A **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* was at Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, on 17 January (PW); one was at Strandfontein sewage works, Western Cape, on 14 February and 20 March (MC).

**Common Black-headed Gulls** *L. ridibundus* were reported from the Port Elizabeth area, Eastern Cape, on 6 November (from late September; AT); Hermanus, Western Cape, on 19 November (two; per TH); Barberspan, North-West Province, on 20 November (JA), Mossel Bay, Western Cape, on 21 November (PG); Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 23–26 November (PO); and Roodeplaat Dam Nature Reserve, Gauteng, on 22 April (GL). A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *L. fuscus* was near Nottingham Road, KwaZulu-Natal, on 15 January (KK & MK). A **Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus* was in a tern roost on Dassen Island, Western Cape, on 8 January (LU), whilst the individual from Cape Recife returned for its seventh season on 7 March (AT). A **Sooty Tern** *S. fuscata* was at Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 23 November (BB). Also in KwaZulu-Natal, at Cape Vidal, a young **Brown Noddy** *Anous stolidus* was observed on 24 February (CS).

The presence of a **Madagascar Cuckoo** *Cuculus rocbii* at Phinda, KwaZulu-Natal, was confirmed on 28 January (DDe). A female **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* was identified at Augrabies Falls National Park, Northern Cape, on 30 April (PCo).

## Tanzania

Records from February–May 2007 include the following. Two **Black**

**Storks** *Ciconia nigra* were in the Grumeti area of the Serengeti on 12 February and five in Tarangire NP (=National Park) on 9 March; there has been an increase in observations of wintering birds in the past 15 years. Three **Red-necked Falcons** *Falco chicquera* at Lake Ndutu on 16 February were at the edge of the species' range in Tanzania. An **Amur Falcon** *F. amurensis* in the Seronera area of the Serengeti on 14 February is an unusual date. Interesting inland records from Speke's Bay Lodge, on the south-eastern shore of Lake Victoria, included a group of five **White-fronted Plovers** *Charadrius marginatus* on 26 February, two **Terek Sandpipers** *Xenus cinereus* on 12 and 27 February, and an adult **Common Tern** *Sterna birundo* in almost full breeding plumage on 12 February (PR). A **Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus* was photographed at Lake Ndutu on 4 May (Figs. 1–2; AG); this is only the second record for the country, the first being of a bird observed off Zanzibar (NB). A juvenile **Levaillant's Cuckoo** *Clamator levaillantii* was being fed by a pair of Arrow-marked Babbler *Turdoides jardineii* at the entrance to Tarangire NP on 23 February. Single **White-throated Bee-eaters** *Merops albicollis* were noted at Olduvai Gorge Museum on 17 February and 4 March. A pair of **Grey Penduline Tits** *Anthoscopus caroli* was observed at its nest with young c.4 miles west of Olduvai Gorge Museum on 17 February and 4 March. A single **Yellow (African Golden) Weaver** *Ploceus subaureus* was studied closely in Tarangire NP on 8 March; this is a significant extension of its known range and well outside its normal habitat (PR).

## Togo

Records from January–February 2007 include the following. Several single **African Openbill Storks** *Anastomus lamelligerus* were in the Haho River floodplain, south of Hahatoe, with a group of eight near a pond on 4 February, of which two were still present on 11th. Also there were a group of seven and another of four

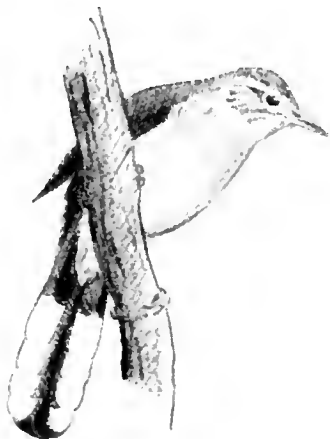
**Lesser Black-winged Lapwings** *Vanellus lugubris*. An adult **Thick-billed Cuckoo** *Pachycoccyx audeberti* was observed in gallery forest near Dzogbégan on 2 February. In the north, two groups of about six **Chestnut-bellied Starlings** *Lamprolornis pulcher* were found along the road east of Gando, near the border with Benin, on 9 January (JM & SM).

## Tunisia

A first-winter **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius* was claimed from Djerba in early January 2007; this would be the first for Tunisia, if accepted (per *Birding World* 20: 56). Records from February 2007 include the following. Four hundred **Marbled Teal** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* were counted at various wetlands near Douz on 8th (EF) and 210 **White-headed Ducks** *Oxyura leucocephala* at El Haouareb Dam on 25th (GO). A **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* was near Douz on 8th (EF). Five hundred **European Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis apricaria* were at Metbasta on 24th (GO). An **Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus* was at Gabès on 21st, with two there the next day. Thousands of **Mediterranean Gulls** *Larus melanocephalus* and up to 1,500 **Slender-billed Gulls** *L. genei* were seen between Skhira and Tyna on 22nd. At Gabès, at least three, possibly five, adult **Great Black-backed Gulls** *L. marinus* were found on 21st; this is a very rare winter visitor (GO).

Two to three calling **European Scops Owls** *Otus scops* were seen near Douz on 8th. A **Eurasian Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* was at Carthage, Tunis, on 4th (EF). **Water Pipits** *Anthus spinoletta* were recorded at Thyna Salina salt works near Sfax (six on 5th: EF) and at Ghidma (three on 25th: GO). Also at Ghidma, a few **Eurasian Reed Warblers** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* were in song on 21st—an early date (GO). A **Tristram's Warbler** *Sylvia deserticola* was at Zaghuan on 5th and another near Matmata on 6th; this species breeds in the west but disperses in winter as far as the desert zone (EF). Four **Desert Sparrows** *Passer simplex* were





Swamp Palm Bulbul / Bulbul des raphias *Thescelocichla leucopleura*  
(Pete Leonard)

observed at Jbil National Park, a known site for the species and Tunisia's only Important Bird Area from where it has been recorded, on 7th (EF).

## Uganda

In late May 2006, a four-day visit to Semliki National Park yielded some predominantly Central African species that reach the eastern limit of their range here, including **Hartlaub's Duck** *Pteronetta hartlaubii* (one on 27th and a pair on 28th), **Nkulengu Rail** *Himantornis haematopus* (two perched c.5 m above ground before dawn on 28th and another on the forest floor the same day), **Yellow-throated Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx flavigularis* (heard daily; one seen on 27th), **Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill** *Tockus camurus* (four on 27th, three on 29th), **Black-casqued Hornbill** *Ceratogymna atrata* (pair on 27th), **Red-rumped Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus atroflavus* (one on 27th), **African Piculet** *Sasia africana* (one on 28th), **White-throated Blue Swallow** *Hirundo nigrita* (eight on the Semliki River on 29th), **Swamp Palm Bulbul** *Thescelocichla leucopleura* (four on 28th), **Yellow-throated Nicator** *Nicator vireo* (one on 28th), **Blue-billed Malimbe** *Malimbus nitens* (three on 26–27th) and **Chestnut-breasted Negrofinch** *Nigrita bicolor* (one on 26th) (PGr, JHa & ATw).

On 11 January 2007 a **Greater Kestrel** *Falco rupicoloides* was observed in Murchison Falls National Park (HB); the *Bird Atlas of Uganda* (Carswell *et al.* 2005) mentions only

two previous records for the country. Also there on the same date was a flock of c.120 **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* (HB). Two **Ring-necked Francolins** *Francolinus streptophorus* were seen crossing a track in the same park and could be observed in detail on 20 February; there are only a few records of this species (AK). On 18 March, six **Black-collared Lovebirds** *Agapornis swindernianus* were observed twice around the Sonso River at the end of the Royal Mile in Budongo forest (JK); there are very few records of this West African species which just reaches western Uganda, and only a couple from this site. A **Speckle-breasted Woodpecker** *Dendropicos poecilolaemus* was at Bigodi Wetland Sanctuary, near Kibale National Park, on 13 February (AK).

*Records were collated by Ron Demey from contributions supplied by Mark Anderson (MA), Joel Avni (JA), Neil Baker (NB), Clive Barlow (CB), Joan Barnes (JB), Ya Ya Barry (YYB), Ben Baxter (BB), Keith Betton (KB), Steve Bird (SB), Mark Boorman (MB), Maans Booysen (MBo), Nik Borrow / Birdquest (NBq), Chris Brewster (CBr), Joost Brouwer (JBr), Herbert Byarubanga (HB), Paul Cardy (PC), Morné Carstens (MC), Peter Chadwick (PCh), Philip Coetzee (PCo), Gregg Darling (GD), Dave Deighton (DD), Daryl Dell (DDe), Ekart Demasius (ED), Ron Demey (RD), Robert J. Dowsett (RJD), Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire (FD-L), Ian Draycott (ID), Hugues Dufourny (HD), Bruce Dyer (BD), Josh Engel (JE), Roger Fieldwick (RF), Erik Forsyth / Rockjumper Birding Tours (EF), Sylvain Garraud (SG), Aadje Geertsma (AG), Peter Ginn (PG), Olivier Girard (OG), John Glendinning (JGl), Mike Goldsworthy (MG), Meidad Goran (MGo), Tertius Gous (TG), John Graham (JGr), Phil Gregory (PGr), Joe Grosel (JG), Marion Gschweng (MGs), Tom Gullick (TGu), Jim Hackett (JHa), Pete Hancock (PH), Margaret Hardaker (MH), Trevor Hardaker (TH), Abdoulaye Harouna (AH), Keith Harrison (KH), Barry Hawtborne (BHa), Maggie Hawtborne (MHa), Gareth Hazell (GH), Henk Hendriks*

*(HH), Eric Herrmann (EH), Andrew Hester (AHe), Louis Heyms (LH), Peter Hitchins (PHi), Stella Hitchins (SHi), David Hoddinott / Rockjumper Birding Tours (DH), Petri Hoppola (PHo), Jon Hornbuckle (JH), Johnnie Kamugisha (JK), Myburgh Kennekam (MKe), Ivan Kikian (IK), Sally King (SK), Alan Kirby (AK), Ben Koks (BK), Erhard Kruger (EK), Kobus Kruger (KK), Monica Kruger (MK), Peter Lawson (PL), Hannu Langenboven (HL), Geoff Lockwood (GL), Charles Marais (CM), Etienne Marais (EM), Chris Martens (CMa), Michael Mason (MMa), Graham McCulloch (GM), Zac Menzies (ZM), Johannes Merz (JM), Sharon Merz (SM), Simon Mitchie (SMi), Richard Montinaro (RM), Kailou Moussa (KMo), K. Muller (KM), Mark Muller (MM), Rick Nuttall (RN), Owen Oertli (OO), Sue Oertli (SO), Keith Offord (KO), Georges Oliso (GO), Pete Outhwaite (PO), Pieter du Plessis (PdP), M. Pretorius (MP), Hugo Rainey (HR), Richard Randall (RR), Derlef Robel (DR), Peter Roberts / Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (PR), J. P. le Roux (JPlR), Linda le Roux (LlR), Martin le Roux (MlR), Kev Roy (KR), Ian Sinclair (IS), Adrian Skerrett (AS), Edward Smith (ES), Jim Smith (JS), Rose Smith (RS), Leen Smits (LS), Colin Soper (CS), Sion Stanton (SS), Tiana Stanton (TS), Gerhardt Streicher (GS), Dewald Swanepoel (DS), Alf Taylor (AT), Rob Tizard (RT), Johan van Tonder (JvT), Tony Tree (TT), Chris Trierweiler (CT), Mashudu Tshifulara (MT), Alfred Twinomujini (ATw), Steph Tyler (ST), Leisha Upfold (LU), Keith Valentine (KV), Mark van der Valle (MvdV), Brian Vanderwalt (BV), Nigel Voaden (NV), Jaap van der Waarde (JvdW), Vince Ward (VW), Phil Whittington (PW), John van Zyl (JvZ) and from Africa—Birds & Birding, Birding World, Dutch Birding, Sandgrouse, capebirdnet, SARareBirdAlert and [www.zestforbirds.co.za](http://www.zestforbirds.co.za).*

*Contributions for Recent Reports can be sent to Ron Demey, Van der Heimstraat 52, 2582 SB Den Haag, Netherlands and also by e-mail: [rondemey@cs.com](mailto:rondemey@cs.com)*

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# Reviews



## Birds of the World: Recommended English Names

Frank B. Gill & Minturn Wright (on behalf of the International Ornithological Congress), 2006. London: Christopher Helm. 259pp + CD. Softback. ISBN 0-7136-7904-2. UK£19.99.

This list of globalised English bird names, produced by a committee under the chairmanship of Frank Gill, has been almost 20 years in the making. Given the extensive name differences between various parts of the English-speaking birding world, many originally doubted the feasibility of the project, whilst its point was also queried on the grounds that scientific nomenclature already provided a set of unique species names. But regional differences have now been reconciled or submerged, and this book is the result. The list is not set in stone, but is offered as a work in progress, to benefit from evaluation and future feedback. It is bound to require frequent revision as species limits are steadily modified in this age of DNA-based taxonomic investigation.

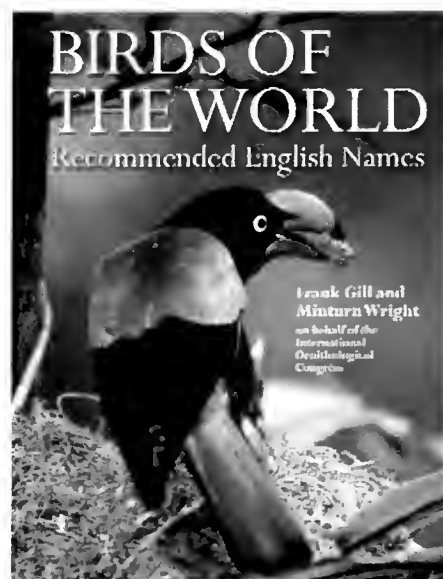
A brief introduction outlines the history of the project and the principles followed in naming. Decisions on thorny issues such as hyphenation, capitalisation and spelling are explained. Then follows the list of species, giving the recommended English name and scientific name with an indication of geographic region of occurrence. Finally, there is a comprehensive alphabetical index of generic and English group names.

This is not primarily a taxonomic work. Family order and species classification are based on the third edition of Howard and Moore's world checklist (Dickinson 2003), but several additional species splits are included, some of them informed by recent molecular studies.

The authors have succeeded in preserving most of the names in common usage in each world region but choices have been unavoidable and the resulting compromise is sometimes unsatisfactory, particularly where genera have been allocated between different regional names. Thus, in *Stercorarius*, we have the North American Parasitic Jaeger and Long-tailed Jaeger but also Pomarine Skua, which is very misleading because the *Catharacta* species are also skuas. The African bustards appear as a mix of bustards and korhaans, and here we find two taxa recently considered conspecific now named as Buff-crested Bustard *Lophotis gindiana* and Rufous-crested Korhaan *L. ruficrista*. Elsewhere, the approach is different, and naming guided by generic classification. Thus, all *Tauracos* are turacos (louries having disappeared) and the *Vanellus* plovers are strictly lapwings.

Compound group names are always contentious, but their treatment here is good. Hyphenation is limited to double bird names such as Harrier-Hawk and Sparrow-Lark, and to cases such as Thick-knee or White-eye where removal would produce an awkward result. Double group names are elsewhere either combined without a hyphen or, more frequently, retained as two capitalised words (as in Rock Thrush).

In Africa, the compilers and the regional committee appear to have steered a reasonable course between names traditionally used in the south and those used in the east and west tropics. We generally observe a mix of southern and eastern names, but in cases of conflict the latter have usually been preferred. Some unfortunate choices include Fork-tailed Drongo for *Dicrurus adsimilis*, hardly appropriate in a global context, and the uninspiring African Pipit for *Anthus cinnamomeus*. And, given that



some well-established local single-word names have been retained elsewhere, the rejection of Lammergeier in favour of Bearded Vulture for *Gypaetus barbatus* seems regrettable. A number of names have been improved. Thus brevity has wrought Ruppell's Vulture for *Gyps ruppellii*, Blue-eared Starling for *Lamprolornis chalybaeus*, Cinnamon-breasted Bunting for *Emberiza tahapisi* and Scarlet-tufted Sunbird for *Nectarinia johnstoni*, and the welcome removal of the 'African' qualifier has given us Mourning Collared Dove for *Streptopelia decipiens* and White-winged Collared Dove for *S. reichenowi*. Moustached Grass Warbler for *Melocichla mentalis* is a good name lifted from *Birds of Africa*. Hyphens have been removed from most compound family names, so that we have buttonquails, helmetshrikes and bushshrikes. Some species splits are not yet, I think, generally accepted. In particular, I note the recognition of two carmine bee-eaters, two hoopoes in Africa, three East African bulbuls and three East African montane white-eyes.

The list should aid international communication between birders and it should help bring greater consis-

tendency into regional English naming, although I wonder how quickly its suggestions will be taken up. It is unlikely that names like loon, Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* and Mew Gull *Larus canus* will enter British birding parlance in the short term, or that robin-chat and turaco will be used in South Africa. For now, some continued divergence of regional lists seems inevitable, and I see no problem in giving alternative as well as preferred English names where space permits.

Almost inevitably, some mistakes have crept in. Two noted are: a) *Stenostira scita* appears in the list twice: as Fairy Flycatcher (in Muscicapidae) and as Fairy Warbler placed *Incertae sedis* near Cisticolidae and Pycnonotidae; only the latter is in the index so is presumably the preferred one; and b) two species are known as Violet-eared Waxbill: *Uraeginthus granatinus* in Africa and *Poephila acuticauda* of Australia.

I recommend this book to any English-speaking birder. It is very good value and comes with a useful CD containing the list as printed in a MS Excel file along with, albeit briefly, a little additional geographical information.

David Pearson

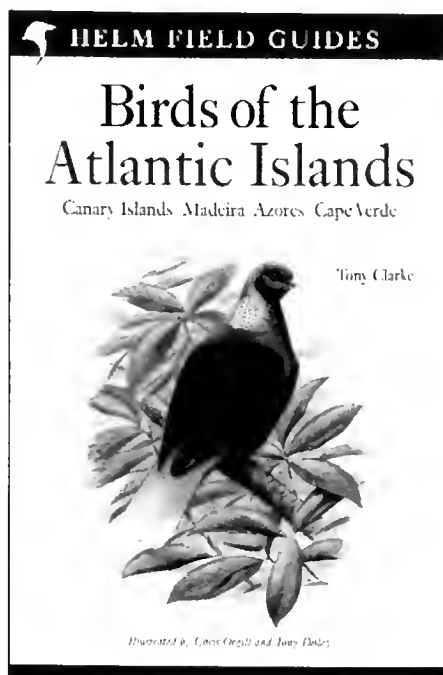
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Dickinson, E. C. (ed.) 2003. *The Howard and Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World*. Third edn. London, UK: Christopher Helm.

## Field Guide to the Birds of the Atlantic Islands

Tony Clarke, Chris Orgill & Tony Disley. 2006. London, UK: Christopher Helm. 368 pp, 69 colour plates and several maps. Softback. ISBN 0-7136-6023-6. UK£29.99.

*Birds of the Atlantic Islands* is the first comprehensive field guide to the birds of Macronesia—the Canary Islands, Madeira, the Azores and Cape Verde Islands. The four archipelagos form an appropriate geographical area for a field guide, par-



ticularly as all of them lie within the boundaries of the Western Palearctic. On a recent visit, I realised that the *Collins Bird Guide* (Svensson *et al.* 1999), which is normally my indispensable travelling companion around the West Palearctic, does not cover the Cape Verdes so, particularly for visitors to this southernmost outlier, this new book is a bonus.

Tony Clarke is well recognised as the Canary Islands' resident expert birder, and has travelled throughout the other archipelagos, making him probably the most authoritative author available for a bird guide to this region. The early chapters cover the geography of the islands, climate, habitats, ornithological history, and birdwatching areas. At around 20 pages, these are well in proportion to the primary purpose of the book—identification—and provide a concise, readable and informative introduction to the islands.

The book deals with over 450 species, covered in 69 colour plates and c.160 pages of text. Key identification pointers appear opposite the illustrations and the main text covers identification, voice, range, distribution, habitat and status. The illustrations are generally very good and the two artists, Chris Orgill and Tony Disley, obviously have very similar styles making for a consistent and

seamless set of illustrations that are realistic and uncluttered, and match the high standard now expected from modern field guides. The text is concise and informative—in Tony's preface he states that the book's purpose is to give visiting birdwatchers a better idea of the status of the various species within each archipelago, as well as providing a means to identify them, and this is achieved well.

With the focus on four archipelagos, the book obviously needs to encompass the endemic species and subspecies, as for birders visiting the islands these birds often form a particular focus of attention. This is not without its difficulties with the huge array and complexity of taxa involved, but the level of detail is certainly greater than that available in the *Collins Bird Guide* or other general field guides. The book gives Tony Clarke's view of taxonomy at the time of publication and, in general, errs on the side of caution; for example the various races of Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* and Barn Owl *Tyto alba* in the region are treated as subspecies not species.

The book covers all resident, migrant and vagrant species. In its efforts to be comprehensive, *Birds of the Atlantic Islands* includes a substantial number of vagrants, yet cannot hope to cover every species that may be recorded in the future. Indeed, there is a single-page annex 'Update for 2005' encompassing those records noted following the cut-off date for the main text, which lists the phenomenal selection of rare birds recorded in the region, particularly on the Azores in autumn, during 2005. The possibility of finding such rarities is now encouraging pioneering birders to visit the islands, making it inevitable that more vagrants will be found. Observers fortunate enough to find a North American warbler in Macaronesia would certainly need to consider more than the half-dozen species illustrated here, making me wonder whether the book would have been better targeted if it had focused more particularly on the identification of the regular island avifauna, with

more space devoted to the taxonomy of the endemics, and less to the ever-increasing array of vagrants.

Nonetheless, *Birds of the Atlantic Islands* is a well-presented book, meeting the high quality expected of modern field guides, covering some remote but increasingly popular birding destinations, and thereby provides a valuable addition to the bird-er's library.

Richard Rafe

## Reference

Svensson, L., Mullarney, K., Zetterström, D. & Grant, P. J. 1999. *Collins Bird Guide*. London, UK: HarperCollins.

## The Birds of the Banc d'Arguin

Paul Isenmann (translated by Starr Pirot), 2006. Arles: La Fondation Internationale du Banc d'Arguin. 191 pp. Softback. ISBN 2-9514914-6-8 (French edition) and 2-9514914-7-6 (English edition). UK£19.95.

The Banc d'Arguin, in Mauritania, is one of those places revered by just about every African birder, as well as all those many birdwatchers who thrill to the spectacle of huge numbers of waterbirds. Those lucky enough to have visited or worked there can really appreciate just how special this place is. Home to some

300 species and over two million wintering waterbirds, the site is rightly a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This book was published to coincide with the Banc d'Arguin's 30th anniversary as a National Park. Its appeal will be wide—the book provides information concerning the park's history, the habitats contained therein, an annotated checklist of the species recorded, and separate chapters on the park's colonial nesting waterbirds, wintering shorebirds and future. The volume concludes with an extensive ornithological bibliography that covers publications issued as recently as June 2006. Very well produced and packed with many fantastic photographs (some spoilt by sub-standard reproduction), it will be required reading for all visitors to the park. Although I found parts of the book frustrating, in that some chapters only provide a small taster of the wealth of data collected on the park's birds, the large bibliography clearly points to more extensive and detailed works.

Phil Atkinson

## A checklist of the birds of Seychelles

Seychelles Bird Records Committee (A. Skerrett, M. Betts, I. Bullock, D. Fisher, R. Gerlach, R. Lucking, J. Phillips & B. Scott), 2007. Victoria, Seychelles: Seychelles Birds Records Committee. 100pp. Softback. No ISBN. UK£7.97.

Seychelles is one of the few countries in the ABC region that has an active bird records committee and this publication details the status of the 242 species accepted by the committee to 2007. Distribution by island is given for all species and the seasonality of migrants also presented. Additional chapters include details of ringing recoveries, the history of bird records in Seychelles and those species reported but not yet accepted to the list. The book is printed by www.lulu.com, one of the increasing number of internet self-publishing companies. These permit very short print-runs thereby making specialist publications such as this feasible. As

Adrian Skerrett, the first author, said in his covering letter, 'if a little place like Seychelles can run a records committee why not just about every country in Africa'. Copies are available from Adrian Skerrett, Hazeley Brook, Keele Road, Keele, Staffs ST5 5AL, UK. Cheques should be made payable to Seychelles Bird Records Committee.

Phil Atkinson

## Waterbird Population Estimates—Fourth Edition

Simon Delany & Derek Scott (compilers and editors), 2006. Wageningen: Wetlands International. 240pp, many colour photographs and maps. Softback. ISBN 90-5882-031-9. UK£25.

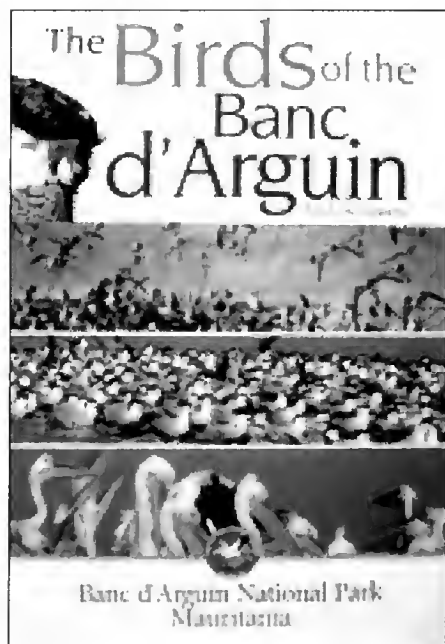
This book does exactly what it says on the cover! The cover photograph of part of a flock of 2.88 million Oriental Pratincoles *Glareola maldivarum* at 80 Mile Beach, north-west Australia, on 7 February 2004, represented a 38-fold increase in the estimate for this species' population, thereby setting the scene for the rest of the book. Compiled by an impressive list of individuals and groups, the book provides a distribution map for each species along with information on the size of the different sub-species/populations, its trend and the data source. Previous editions of this work have been essential references for assessing population change amongst African waterbirds, and the latest update continues that trend.

Phil Atkinson

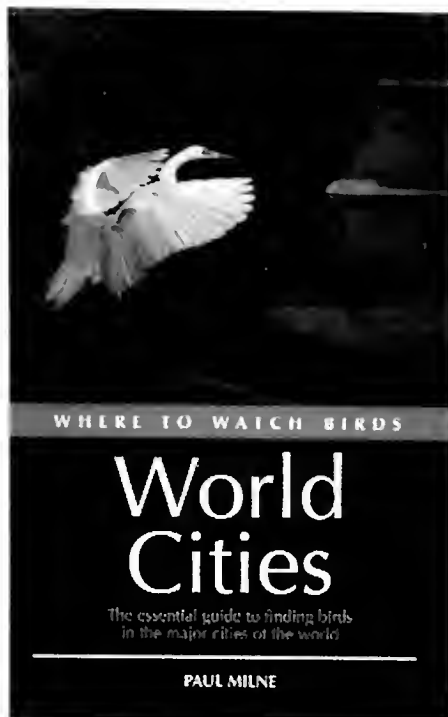
## Where to Watch Birds: World Cities

Paul Milne, 2006. London, UK: Christopher Helm. 496 pp, many line drawings and maps. Softback. ISBN 0-7136-6983-7. UK£16.99

Written primarily for business travellers, tourists with a few hours to spare or birders in transit, this latest edition to the Christopher Helm 'Where to watch' series provides information on sites in or around 61 cities. Unfortunately only six African







cities are covered, compared to 20 in Europe and 16 in Asia. The opening chapters provide an overview of urban birding (including public parks, zoos, airports, golf courses, refuse tips, sewage lagoons and wetlands), useful tips (covering local birders, tour guides, internet resources, maps, renting cars etc.), how to use the book and a glossary of geographical features. Interestingly, the author has elected to use two different sources for nomenclature, the *British Birds List of Birds of the Western Palearctic* for that region and *Birds of the World: A Checklist* (Clements) for everywhere else. There are a number of other species for which Milne has used names not included in Clements, to recognise names in local usage or recent splits, and these are listed in 'How to Use This Book'. Several of these relate to the ABC region.

The bulk of the book comprises the individual city accounts. In Africa these are: Addis Ababa (seven pages, eight sites), Cairo (eight pages, six sites), Cape Town (eight pages, ten sites), Johannesburg and Pretoria (eight pages, ten sites), Kampala and Entebbe (six pages, eight sites), and Nairobi (15 pages, 14 sites). Given its prominence as a tourist location, it is perhaps a shame that Banjul was not

included. Each city account includes a general introduction including details of how to get around and a list of typical species likely to be seen, individual site accounts incorporating directions, key species, for key sites a map, and lists of useful contacts, websites, books and publications. The site accounts start with those closest to the city centre and radiate out, the most distant areas being up to 90 km away. The city accounts have been refereed by the likes of Callan Cohen, Brian Finch and Derek Pomeroy, and provide a good overview of the best sites to visit.

Overall the book serves its purpose as an introduction to the best birding sites in and around major cities. However, from an African perspective I would still recommend that birders visiting Cape Town, Johannesburg and Kampala opt for more detailed guides such as *Southern African Birdfinder* (Cohen *et al.*) and *Where to Watch Birds in Uganda* (Rossouw & Sacchi).

Richard Webb

### Mammals of Madagascar—A Complete Guide

Nick Garbutt, 2007. London, UK: Christopher Helm. 304 pp, 224 colour photographs, 189 maps, 65 line drawings. Softback. ISBN 0-7136-7043-6. UK£25.

Madagascar is perhaps best known for its lemurs but with over 190 terrestrial species has much more to offer the birder with an interest in mammals. Nick Garbutt's original *Mammals of Madagascar*, published by Pica Press in 1999, was widely acclaimed but has been out of print for some time. This new book, designed with field use in mind, updates the original. Covering Madagascar's terrestrial mammals, it opens with an overview of how to use the guide followed by a ten-page review of the biogeography and regions of Madagascar. The main section, the species' accounts, covers 224 pages and each account includes measurements, description and identification, habitat and distribution,

behaviour, and details of where to look for the species in question. Many of the accounts are accompanied by stunning colour photographs and each also has a distribution map. Line drawings are used to illustrate those species for which photographs were unavailable and are also put to good effect to depict the head shapes of bats.

Garbutt recognises 192 species, including 87 species of lemur. Interestingly, Mittermeier *et al.* (2006) only recognise 64 species of lemur, whilst Duff & Lawson (2004) even more conservatively list just 58 species. Some of the additional species recognised by Garbutt are recent discoveries but others relate to taxonomic 'splits', some of which may yet prove to be poorly founded.

The species' accounts precede chapters on 'Conservation and Protected Areas', and 'Parks and Reserves'. A 20-page site guide covers 17 areas and presents information on 'Location and Access', 'Habitat and Terrain', 'Key Mammal Species', 'Season', 'Facilities' and 'Recommendations' on how to approach a visit to the site. The book concludes with a three-page glossary, a bibliography listing 721 references and a full index. This is a worthy successor to Garbutt's original book and is highly recommended. It is worth buying for the photographs alone.

Richard Webb

### References

- Duff, A. & Lawson, A. 2004. *Mammals of the World: A Checklist*. London, UK: Christopher Helm.
- Mittermeier, R. A., Konstant, W. R., Hawkins, F., Louis, E. E., Langrand, O., Ratsimbazafy, J., Rasoloarison, R., Ganzhorn, J. U., Rajaobelina, S., Tattersall, I. & Meyers, D. M. 2006. *Lemurs of Madagascar*. Washington DC: Conservation International.

## Pocket Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of East Africa

Stephen Spawls, Kim M. Howell & Robert C. Drewes, 2006. London, UK: Christopher Helm. 240pp, many colour photographs and distribution maps. Softback. ISBN 0-7136-7425-3. UK£14.99.

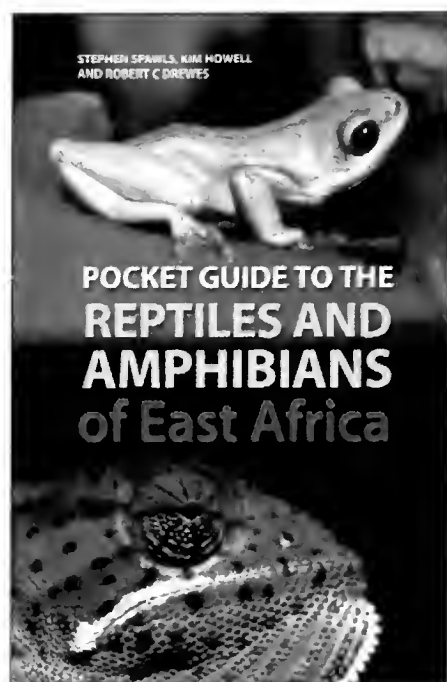
This is the first pocket field guide to reptiles and amphibians of the five countries of eastern Africa: Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. It is a condensed version of a 500-page field guide to reptiles of the area published by the same authors in 2002. In this new book, 190 of the commoner reptiles (of the 420 or so species recorded) are described and 85 of the commoner amphibians (of over 200 known species) are added.

Following a brief introduction covering use of the book and some notes on zoogeography, observing and collecting, and conservation, not

to mention safety (!), the bulk comprises the species accounts, mostly two per page. These follow a standard pattern of a colour photograph (for the main entries), a distribution map (ditto) and a text covering identification, habitat and distribution, natural history and, in the case of snakes, venom. There are shorter notes about some of the other species.

There is a diversity of both reptiles and amphibians in eastern Africa ranging from crocodiles to tiny tree frogs, and this book will certainly aid the identification and, hopefully, increase the interest in, and hence conservation of, these often rather neglected groups. Remember though that the book only covers c.50% of the species you could potentially see, so if the animal in front of you does not quite match a description, you may well be faced by a species not covered here.

*Peter Lack*



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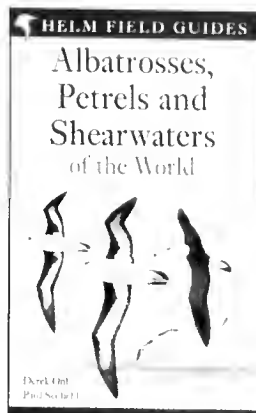
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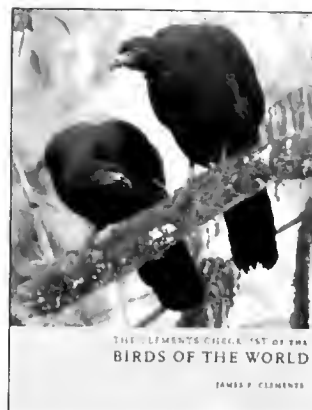
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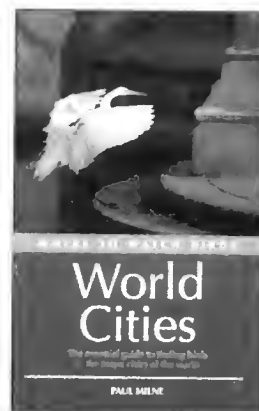
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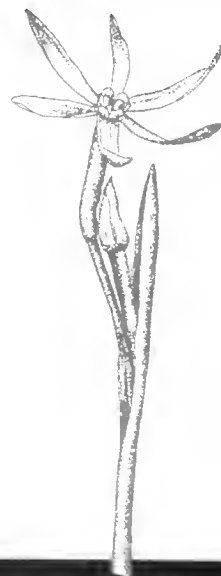
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### **Notes for Contributors**

The ABC welcomes original contributions on all aspects of the birds of Africa, here defined as the area covered by Collar, N.J. and Stuart, S.N. 1985. *Threatened Birds of Africa and Related Islands: The ICBP/IUCN Red Data Book*. Cambridge, UK: International Council for Bird Preservation, namely continental Africa, Indian Ocean islands west of 80°E, e.g. Madagascar, the Mascarene Islands and Socotra; Atlantic Ocean islands on or east of the mid-Atlantic ridge, e.g. the Tristan da Cunha group, the Azores and the Canaries.

Contributions will be accepted subject to editing and refereeing by independent reviewers, where appropriate. The Editorial Team will be happy to advise authors on the acceptability of material at draft stage if desired.

#### **Submissions**

Two hard (printed) copies should be sent unless submitting by e-mail (preferred) to the editor's address on the inside front cover. Typewritten manuscripts should be double-spaced, on one side of the paper only, with wide margins all round. All submissions are acknowledged.

Contributions are accepted in English or French: French summaries are required for all

papers published in English, and vice versa. Those submitting papers should supply a summary for translation into English, or French, as appropriate.

If you submit your contribution on CD or floppy disk, please state computer (e.g. IBM compatible PC, Macintosh) and word-processing package (e.g. Word, WordPerfect) used.

When sending your contribution on disk, please do not key anything in ALL CAPS (i.e. with the CAPS LOCK key depressed) unless the combination always occurs in that form (e.g. 'USA'). Do not use the carriage return key at the end of lines, and do not right justify the margins. When formatting tables use one tab, and not spaces, between each column. Unless a sketch map is provided as part of the article, the names of places should follow those on standard or readily available maps (preferably a recent edition of *The Times Atlas of the World*).

#### **Preferred names**

Given the current instability over worldwide lists of bird names, authors are requested to follow those used in *The Birds of Africa* Vols. 1-7. The African Bird Club has recently published ([www.africanbirdclub.org/resources/](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/resources/)

[checklist.html](#)) a checklist of birds in its region. This is based on *Birds of Africa* but incorporates more recent revisions where appropriate. It includes preferred scientific, English and French names, as well as races and alternatives used by publications widely used in Africa. For bird names this list should be used or at least the preferred name used there should be given as an alternative. For non-*Birds of Africa* species (e.g. from the Malagasy region) use Dowsett & Forbes-Watson (1993). Deviation from such works should be noted and the reasons given. The Editorial Team will keep abreast of changes in nomenclature and when an agreed list of African names is available, will consider switching to follow it.

#### **Style**

Authors are requested to follow conventions used in *The Bulletin of the African Bird Club* and to refer to a recent issue for guidance. A detailed style guide can be obtained, either electronically or as a hard copy, on request from the Managing Editor.



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The Club aims to appoint many further ABC Representatives. If you are interested in supporting and promoting the Club in your region, have any queries, or require further information relating to the ABC Representatives scheme please do not hesitate to contact the Membership Secretary at the Club address, e-mail membership@africanbirdclub.org.

ABC is seeking Country Representatives in the following countries, principally within the Club's region: Algeria, Azores, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde Islands, Chad, Comoros & Mayotte, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Kenya, Libya, Madeira, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Réunion, Rodriguez, Rwanda, Senegal, Socotra, Somalia, St Helena, Sudan, Togo, Tristan da Cunha and USA.

find all the answers but will try to help. The service is free to ABC members. Contact: Keith Betton, who is also custodian of ABC's journal library, at 8 Dukes Close, Folly Hill, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 0DR, UK. Tel: +44 1252 724068. E-mail: info@africanbirdclub.org.

### AfricanBirding e-mail discussion list

Launched, in October 2000, by the ABC and the Pan-African Ornithological Congress, AfricanBirding or AB, as it is known, has become a useful forum for those interested in African birds. To join the discussion, which averages 1–2 messages a day, send a blank e-mail to AfricanBirding-subscribe@yahoo.com. You will then receive an e-mail instructing you how to join.

The Club also maintains a list of members' e-mail addresses. This list is confidential and used only for Club purposes, e.g. for informing members of upcoming events and news concerning the Club. It is not divulged to anybody outside the Club or used for commercial advertising. At present it includes addresses for about 50% of the membership. Please send any additions or amendments to the membership secretary: membership@africanbirdclub.org.

## Supported and Affiliated Membership

The Supporting Members scheme is a key part of the Club's strategy of encouraging the spread of knowledge and understanding of birds as widely as possible throughout Africa. The scheme enables Africans who would not otherwise have the resources to join, to become members of the Club. The scheme is funded by Supporting Members who pay a minimum of UK£30 to cover their own membership and the subscription of at least one African member. The money they contribute over and above their own subscription is placed in a special fund that is used to cover the membership expenses of African members whom they may have nominated, or who have been nominated by other Club members.

Although we have suggested a minimum of UK£30 to become a Supporting Member, any contribution is welcome. All members of the Club, even if they do not feel able to become Supporting Members themselves, are invited to nominate candidates for supported memberships. Candidates should be nationals of an African country, with a genuine interest in wild birds but without the resources to become members in their own right. Africans who think they

may qualify are very welcome to put their own names forward, supported by a letter of recommendation from someone such as their employer, teacher or an officeholder in a local wildlife organisation.

The scheme now also includes clubs who wish to be affiliated with the African Bird Club in African countries where it is difficult for local individuals to become members in their own right. Clubs accepted for membership under the scheme receive up to six copies of each issue of the bulletin for circulation among their members. Instead of paying a membership fee, Clubs are asked to provide a short annual report on their activities that may be published in the bulletin. Clubs interested in becoming Affiliated Member Clubs are invited to apply to the ABC Secretary giving details of their membership, their constitution or a statement of their objectives and conditions of their membership, and their activities to date.

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